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b o o k :
a l t e r n a t e
s t a t e s

MA THESIS IN IDBM

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This is a book about books. This is an object. This is design. This is all that was mentioned and none. This is more likely an organisation of sensory information, interpreted in fragments and constructed seamlessly in the consciousness of a sentient being. This is an idea. Its materiality is in doubt, yet materiality itself is its concern. This is a Master's thesis in the Arts that explores books as designed objects and in its process follows a particular combination of practice-led research¹ and research in the humanities, theory and practice, philosophy and science, and reason and intuition. It does tend to the dialectic, the tension between concepts, this can be described as a quality of the subject, also the outlook.

The suggestion of the dialectic starts with the book. What is it? The prevalent conception is that of a literary format², I'm reading a book: is it a novel or a biography, a treatise or conjecture, does it exist? All notions seem to be encompassed by the existent concept, regardless of materiality. A book is then a certain kind of literary format and a certain kind of physical object that is the container of the literary format. It's also a unique combination of both: a literary format consisting of a physical object and a physical object consisting of a literary format. This project is concerned with the latter, not in its entirety but in the limited interest of design. It explores that concept of the book as a unique combination of container and contained, physical and abstract, content and frame, all while being designed. It is not concerned with other notions of the term such as note-books, almanacs, diaries etc.

Why? In considerations of utility, the book is comparable only to the lamp and the chair. It has endured for centuries with minor changes that were more in the way of improvement than transformation. Few other creations of man exhibit such tenacity. Art has changed, music and furniture—evolved, to suggest human progress. But the book remains original. Can this be attributed to an attainment of ideal design? And if so, why do books tend to look the same? It is as if the singular redeemer of their distinction lies exclusively coded in literary text. There's a certain unbalance to this, when the different elements are segregated without so much as an interplay, and a decidedly logocentric bias³. The project takes off from this perceived unseemliness in the design of the book or the book as a designed object. Only books which are predominantly composed of literary text are considered—comic books, children's books, photobooks and art-books are excluded from its scope. Further matters of definition, scope, terminology and semiotics are discussed in detail during the process.

When design is mentioned, it also warrants an explanation of the aesthetic and the approach. Here it's the Zen-inspired, post-war Japanese design pioneered by the likes of Shiro Kuramata, Issey Miyake and Sori Yanagi, and assimilated by a newer generation of designers like Naoto Fukasawa and Kenya Hara that provides the formative backdrop. The broader aesthetic of Zen is also explored. A particular aspect of it that is best mentioned at the outset is the Yin-Yang, an ancient Chinese concept with Taoist origins; Yin and Yang are described as opposite yet

inter-twined cosmic forces that interact to maintain balance in the Universe, a symbol of duality tending to non-duality which is at the heart of Zen. This manifests itself in this book at two levels: dialectics in the discourse and the dynamics of content-frame interaction. This interaction of content and frame also provoked a causality dilemma that had profound implications on the process.

What comes first, the contained—text⁴, or the container—physical: dimensions, number of pages, shape, book-binding, paper, weight and abstract: grid system, layout, page bounds? This might seem an oblique question as typically the text is first written and then typeset and finally printed to be bound and incarnate as the book. Page numbers are decided, if mostly, by the length of the text, and considerations of shape and binding are addressed either at the editing phase or altogether subverted to spawn multiple versions that make neat entries to the market with different price-labels and covers. Also, these are concerns of the publisher than writer. But this is not that type of book. This is a book that is *designed* and all aforementioned matters are the concern of the *designer*. Here the container and the contained stand at equal significance and their interaction alike Yin-Yang: one defines the other while being defined in turn. Causality does not proceed as a linear vector—its rather a rippling, organic exchange in both directions.

The text is composed in the manner of Zuihitsu, a genre of Japanese literature with a free-flowing structure that *follows the brush*. That does not

mean that this book is without organisation. A system is in place, shaped by the same dialectic that was just discussed. It reflects the process, the subject and multiple design concerns, but within this *frame*, the text is free. It's allowed to fluctuate, and shift to loci that evolve during the process; there is no rigorous enforcement of premeditated logical hierarchies. The text is merely formed in parts. It could contain titles as an indication of the locus being explored but beyond that there is no strict organisation into sections, sub-chapters or indices—with the exception of endnotes. Even page numbers are absent to preclude navigation. This book is designed to be read from end to end.

There are two narratives within the text: major and meta. The major narrative follows the central exploration of the subject while the meta narrative is a wide-ranging assortment of associations and commentary on the first. The meta is not composed linearly, it is formed in a recursive process resulting in layers⁵. When juxtaposed, the two of them bring a certain tension within the text, and temporality and voices.

Yet, there is a third narrative. *This*. It is an exordium following a certain logical sequence that serves to introduce a predominantly academic audience to this project. It falls within the frame and follows the linear time scale; i.e., it has been written before the following parts. All statements in this narrative express intent as opposed to that which is existent.

Endnotes:

1. Carol Gray provides a definition for practice-led research as "...research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of the practice and practitioners".⁶ Revisited later in the book
3. The preference of linguistic means of communication over non-verbal means
4. Regarded in the semiotic sense
5. Text is produced in different stages during the process and superimposed

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In the beginning it was *magic*¹. The act was performed in deep galleries² wherein beasts of prey and predators were invoked in naturalistic representations of broad outline and shallow colour, etched and drawn across the walls. We think that the masters of these rites were shamans, intermediaries to the *spirit world*, and the first artists. The oldest of their paintings date back to about 40,000 B.C., coinciding roughly with the beginnings of the Upper Palaeolithic Era when artefacts first started to make wide-spread appearance....

The earliest of sculptures such as the Venus of Hohle-Fels³ are even older, but it was after the end of the last ice age at about 12,000 B.C. that the artistic pursuits of the early humans gained noticeable momentum. Following what has been described as the *Neolithic Demographic Transition*⁴, groups of nomadic people began to settle down and acquired a taste for order. They initiated agriculture and livestock farming, and built mud-brick homes populated with new articles of living—pottery, weapons, tools; in these artefacts,...

they also accomplished their desire for decoration and adornment, with geometric patterns and carvings, while furtherance of spirituality found new expression in massive structures of stone, Megaliths, constructed during the later Neolithic. The earliest post and lintel architecture is from this period. It saw the rise of the Ziggurats, the early Pyramids, and a series of temples across the Greek Isles that reveal an underlying awareness of physical space and perspective. Two great civilisations emerged—Sumer, in the valley between Tigris...

and Euphrates, and Egypt, along the Nile. The first cities were established in Sumer; they were autonomous states connected by language and religion and governed by a priestly class. Society was deeply spiritual, its artistic efforts almost exclusively devoted to the gods. Art remained symbolic.⁵ It could represent the *soul* in the form of votive figures placed before the gods in vicarious worship, ensuring blessings even when the worshipper could not be present; the Ziggurats themselves, atop which these shrines were built, were symbolic...

cosmic mounds of a kind. Narrative art was also born there—art connected to time and place and concerned with the representation of events. This was divergent to developments in Egypt, where art had little concern with time and space as it was in the service of kings who were not representatives of gods, but the gods themselves. They were depicted in an idealised, timeless manner overpowering in presence. The approach can also be described as being almost intellectual in its hierarchy and the schematic combination of front...

and profile views in a pictorial space signified with hieroglyphs. Culture's mainstay was the safeguarding of *life after death*, believed by early Egyptians to be *actual* life, and observed with devout and often monumental endeavouring. The canon of Egyptian art is also among the most consistent in all of time with little change due in over 3000 years. A longer term is perhaps claimed only by the Chinese civilisation, which started to flourish along the valleys of the Huang he river from about 2200 B.C. Its first dynasty was called Xia,...

and it laid out at large the cultural blueprint of what has been since called the *Orient*—the East. Their beliefs were comparable to the Egyptians in the regard for the world beyond, but developed in a different vein forming a cult of ancestor-worship and divination, and with much emphasis on astronomy. A particular character of Xia—and Chinese art in general—is found in the mythozoological hybrids⁶ of different animals that were often cast as vases and jars—statue-vessel hybrids in themselves—and packed with a verve that was animalistic,...

yet dignified in the image of a sophisticated culture. They held a quality of rhythmic tension, a contained muscular force that was perceptible. The description is also well suited to the art of civilisations in the Americas—the Olmecs, Chavin, and the later Aztecs and Zapotecs. They developed a zoomorphic style of representation similar to Chinese art, but without external influence; theirs was a world isolated and culturally insulated from the rest, even their many advancements to be *re-invented*.⁷ Meanwhile in Ancient Greece,...

Classical art was taking form, in the 5th century B.C., when Athenian society was at its height, and the arts, philosophy and the sciences alike expanded to cultivate much of what is Western thought. The Acropolis and Parthenon were constructed during this period, as were the sculptures of Phidias and Praxiteles. They introduced the contrapposto⁸, the elegant stoic expression, and the reclining nude. The advancement of naturalistic representation in this period was unprecedented; the tradition continued without major changes through...

the Hellenistic phase, after which it influenced the evolution of Roman art. Another notable influence on Rome was the Etruscan civilisation, which flourished in regions of ancient Italy in the 1st millennium B.C. Their contributions were pioneering in the development of infrastructure including roads, aqueducts, and more architectural elements like the arch, but their art, being of an expressive and vivid character, appealed less to Rome's classical inclinations. Towards the end of the millennium, the civilisation vanished. These last...

centuries of pre-Christian time also witnessed the birth of three major religions in the East: Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Monotheistic belief systems gradually began to gain more prominence, but never completely replacing existing pantheons and fertility cults. Even after the official adoption of Christianity during the time of Constantine, paganism was being practiced. It was a society of multifarious and complex organisation, and by no means were the transitions smooth. At first the state of Rome was a monarchy, which was overthrown a few...

centuries later—in part a consequence of events following the Rape of Lucretia⁹—and an oligarchic republic was formed. Julius Caesar emerged a seminal figure, but was later assassinated in a coup that instigated full-fledged war. A golden age ultimately dawned with the victory of Augustus, and the Roman Empire was established. Rome never pursued an original style of art; it closely followed Greek models accentuated by Neo-Platonic ideals in a style referred to as the Archaic. Towards the 5th century, this aesthetic classicism weakened...

and near-Eastern influences became increasingly apparent in its official art; the period known as the Middle Ages commenced. By then Christianity had established its centres of power, and the Church had become involved in the matters of the state. The following 1000 years were, in effect, the reign of the Church. It initiated vast architectural projects in which classicism was synthesised with Christian thinking into a uniquely Christian art. Even so, this was not an absolute style. In the Eastern Roman Empire, the Orthodox Church...

In 8th century China, the first books were printed using woodblocks. The new technology enabled faster dissemination of Confucian writings, which had been hitherto reproduced by rubbing graphite on paper placed atop carved stone slabs. The format was similar to the Roman volumen but used hemp paper instead of parchment. It extended many metres and was read laterally.

had evolved a Greco-Roman characteristic that strived towards a more mystical expression of religious experience. It tended to the decorative, and interiors were afforded a three-dimensional reality that contrasted with the infinite flatness of early Catholic churches. The style, called Byzantine, also made a number of original advancements¹¹ that made its way to Romanesque art—the first truly pan-European artistic style, which preceded Gothic and made its manifest appearance in the 11th century. Architecture during the...

Romanesque started off the need to reconstruct churches destroyed in the Viking invasions and political strife of the early Middle Ages. This led to the new buildings acquiring a massive, fortress-like quality emphasising horizontal-span and solidity of build; it also typified the Church's central position in the mediaeval cycle of life. Pilgrimages were becoming increasingly common and the Church was now faced with the problem of initiating its illiterate members to the Christian worldview. The practical solution was a didactic schema of...

architectural ornament. Sources were found in the Insular art¹² of Celtic manuscripts, and illumination was adopted to sculpture to produce a non-classical hybrid that was subordinate to architecture, yet embodying a frenzied energy that was suited to newfound belief. At the same time a geometric unity was attained in space, which was taken further with the invention—or rather, appropriation—of rib vaulting in Gothic architecture; appropriation, since rib vaults first appeared in the great mosques¹³ of Islam. But it were Gothic cathedrals that...

made them common-place. They afforded an austere elegance of style that eliminated the need of decoration for spiritual effect; light became the primary aesthetic and the soaring height made an analogy to the elevation of the *spirit* to the heavens. It was in many ways a purposive change brought upon the ecclesiastical art of the time, regarded by some clergy¹⁴ as being too gilded and a source of distraction for the monks and friars immersed in scholastic work. The sole resplendent element in the solemn expanses of light and shadow...

in cathedral spaces was now the stained window, which evolved as a narrative delivering glimpses from the life and deeds of Christ and branching into a number of tracery styles over the years. Such fantastic forms as the Flamboyant came to be; they can be either viewed as the culmination of a long line of mannered imitation or as imaginative new styles. Painting underwent even greater change. The better part of it ascribed to the technical virtuosity of Flemish masters like Jan van Eyck, Robert Campin and Rogier van der Weyden,...

who made great strides towards the attainment of trompe l'oeil perspective, thereby bringing to fruition a naturalistic treatment of space that had been the pursuit of centuries of painterly effort. But this notion of the pictorial space as a world seen through a window was primarily European. In certain traditions like Islamic art¹⁵, all imagery was proscribed. The Far East embodied an appreciation for the transcendental, and hence cherished artistic subjectivity. Art was not conceptualised, but intuited in a visionary moment of rapture,... when the Absolute state(16) was

experienced beyond Relative being. In practice it desisted from the very illusionistic space of European art. Still, aesthetic aspirations in society were never homogenous. The affluent classes sought opulent and dazzling effect that were often at odds with the ideals of the intellectual elite. Ironically, some of the intellectuals themselves were abiding in settings of splendour that they had so denounced in idea. These, often conflicting functions of expressing faith and according luxury, were pressed on art from the...

very beginning. It was in the 15th century that a *rational* art was conceived. Antecedents to the shift had already appeared during Greek Classicism, but were largely subdued within the zealous piety of the Christian Era, and making its marked arrival only under the humanism of the Renaissance. Change was not immediate, neither had it permeated the frontiers. The North and the Low Countries in Europe were continuing traditions of Gothic art well in to the 18th century; Renaissance was very much an Italian phenomenon. It became prominent in the 15th...

and 16th centuries as a unified reform in the arts, sciences, philosophy, theology, and of the economy, following a period of scientific invention and the lack of contentment provided by faith in times that were scarred by plagues and political unrest. The mingling of the supernatural and the quotidian had by then progressively weakened; man became the measure of all things. In the 16th century, the three dimensional perspective had already matured, and the effects of atmosphere and light become manifest in a fluid pictorial space....

In the mid-15th century, Johannes Gutenberg re-invented printing and started the first press in Europe. Books began to be made in hardcover¹⁷ format, closely resembling the codex. The first books produced were Gothic¹⁸ volumes of Bibles and other Christian texts.

Yet this life-like depiction of the observable world was not *realistic*; it was still in the idealised image of Greek art and its subjects were derived mostly from mythological and historical sources. It was staged, articulately if so, in a rational ordering of space and figures within canons of fair taste and propriety. A true *realist* approach was begun only at the turn of the 17th century, by Caravaggio, and in the genre paintings¹⁹ and still-lives of Flemish art. The parallel mode was a riotous Baroque, in which all classical...

The High Renaissance saw a revival of interest in classical literature which inspired the Venetian typesetter Aldus Manutius to launch his Classics. They were a major stylistic departure from the early dense, heavy volumes printed by Gutenberg and peers. The new books were slim, portable, and they featured an elegant new typeface—Italic. Experiments in layout and composition were also pursued, what were perhaps the first attempts at expressive type, and the rudiments of punctuation.

divisions between painting, architecture and sculpture were abandoned in a seemingly infinite void that transpired to trick the observer as to what was substantial, and what was image. It could be argued that the Renaissance ideal of a geometrically unified space was furthered in this approach, but its character could not be further removed from the stoic restraint of the former. A lightening of effect occurred, in 18th century France, in the elegant, decorative form of Rococo. Paintings and sculpture retreated to the backdrop, and dramatic chiaroscuro...

New formats were subsequently created, often with mass consumption as the primary objective. Many of these were quarto²⁰, octavo or duodecimo volumes of ephemera, like Chapbooks and Penny Dreadfuls that were sold by travelling salesmen. They featured woodcut illustrations, sometimes unrelated, and largely meant as entertainment for the working classes who had limited access to the revelries of the time.

was replaced by an air of languor. The style was uniform in its use of soft hues and alabaster-like textures, which imparted it a fragile, ephemeral radiance. An eminent artist of the period, Jean-Antoine Watteau, has been thus described: "...a connoisseur of the unplucked string, the immobility before the dance, the moment that falls between departure and nostalgia."²¹ Rococo was a flattering backdrop to an aristocratic life of leisurely indulgence—the life made infamous by the likes of Marie Antoinette. This came to an abrupt halt in 1789 when...

the compounding of mass discontentment and ideas of the Enlightenment²² sparked off the French Revolution, which lasted a decade until Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power. The ramshackle economy and lost faith needed redemption, and the state projected itself as the deliverer, in a grand, romantic style that called upon classical associations. The period was also experiencing a revival of classical styles, notably in England, where gentlemen scholars had been travelling to ruins in Italy and Greece, and brought back with them antiques and romantic images...

of the past. The fascination increased with time, moving beyond ruins and the picturesque to nature itself as the ultimate expression of the sublime. Artists and writers alike tried to capture its wild, untamed glory. They sought the transcendental moment—a pure emotional confrontation with nature—and pursued it to end. The macabre and the morbid became equated with the serene; they were but *forces of nature*. But not all art followed this lead. Painters like Gustave Courbet and Francisco Goya were concerned with the more formal...

The introduction of popular fiction in cheap paperbacks in the 19th century further expanded the market for books. The production runs became larger, and publishers extended their reach to retail by opening bookstores. By then mechanisation had displaced traditional hand presses and an inexpensive method to manufacture paper had significantly cut book costs. Books were sometimes provided with sleeves for added protection.

aspects of representation. They wanted to depict the world as they saw it, without idealisation or re-arrangement; they discarded the coordinated perspective of mimetic realism, and started painting in unblended patches of colour. In the later part of the 19th century, this became the Impressionist movement. Its essence was the knowledge that forms are shaped by light reflecting them, that objects do not have definitive colours of their own. Impressionists set out to capture the exact image at a particular moment and under a given light....

They painted hastily, following the shifting light in a series of impressions, where form was blurred by movement and all boundaries dissolved by light. The finished paintings increasingly resembled sketches and any interstice was finally approached. This *momentary* realism was attained in sculpture by Auguste Rodin and Edgar Degas—himself a painter—who caught unaware glimpses of life in spontaneously modelled forms. Gradually the spiritual vein re-surfaced, in the canvases of the Post-Impressionists, who infused the formal approach...

In the late 1870s, Christopher Dresser designed a series of metalware that integrated a concern for industrial production with original explorations of material and form.²³ The designs were distinct in their severe yet imaginative geometric shapes and usage of identical components; the surfaces were unadorned.

with a personal vision. A range of styles ensued—from the superimposed views of Paul Cézanne, the progenitor of Cubism, to the psychological horror of Van Gogh and Munch, which inspired Expressionism. *Beauty* was questioned. The *pictorial window* became alternately manipulated or discarded. The developments were primarily across two planes: rational analysis of form and intuitive self-expression. Modern art was born. It asks: what is art?

Economy of means and the standardisation of components were taken further by Peter Behrens in his designs for the German General Electric Corporation at the turn of the 20th century. He introduced a unified design language across the product-range and communication media which made the company instantly recognisable and promoted an image of stability to consumers. The trademark became an important part of the identity, and a key element in advertisements. The first comprehensive brand design came into effect.

In 1919, The Bauhaus was established. Walter Gropius, a former associate of Behrens became its first director. It attempted to bridge the gap between art, craft and industrial manufacturing in a mediaeval guild atmosphere that encouraged collaborative effort. Products were designed democratically, taking advantage of new materials and technology, but they were often utopian. A greater concern for functionality and accessibility has since taken the centre-stage.

In 1932, the Albatross Modern Continental Library of Hamburg launched its Verlag series of paperbacks.²⁴ The new books were pioneering in many aspects: they featured colour-coded covers, improved readability and a standardised size—based on the golden ratio—that made them easily recognisable. Not long after, books started to become ubiquitous and a variety of formats are now commonly available.

Endnotes:

1. Palaeolithic ritual magic
2. Deep cave halls at Lascaux, El Castillo etc.
3. Dated 35000 – 40000 B.C., and amongst the oldest known works of figurative art
5. As opposed to figurative, not to be confused with 19th century Symbolism
6. Mythical creatures composited of parts of different animals
7. Weaving, pottery, metalwork etc. flourished in cultures such as Chavin without known outside influences
8. A delicate asymmetrical balancing of the human figure
9. A semi-legendary figure in Roman tradition. According to accounts of the historian Titus Livius, she committed suicide after being assaulted by Sextus Tarquinius, son of the Etruscan king of Rome, provoking a revolt against the autocracy¹⁰
11. Mostly from Constantinople; the unified space in Hagia Sophia, it's pendentive dome etc.
12. Known for its rich, interlaced patterns incorporating biomorphs and geometrical motifs
13. Great Mosques of Córdoba and Sousse; Mezquita Bab-al-Mardum, Toledo
14. Abbot Suger of St-Denis and Evrard de Fouilloy of Amiens were the more prominent figures
15. Unique in that it shuns all imagery and sculpture in favour of ornate calligraphic renderings of Koranic verses
16. Asiatic belief-systems such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism are linked in their concept of a true reality beyond forms. In Zen, this is called the Absolute, whilst the Relative is worldly reality
17. Bound between hard, protective covers; soft-covers are bound in flexible stock
18. Also known as Blackletter
19. Scenes from everyday life: peasants working in the field etc.
20. Quarto volumes are made from paper-sheets printed with 8 pages; octavo, with 16 pages; and duodecimo, with 24 pages
22. A period of rationalist thought and scientific breakthrough starting in the late 17th century and extending to the turn of the 19th

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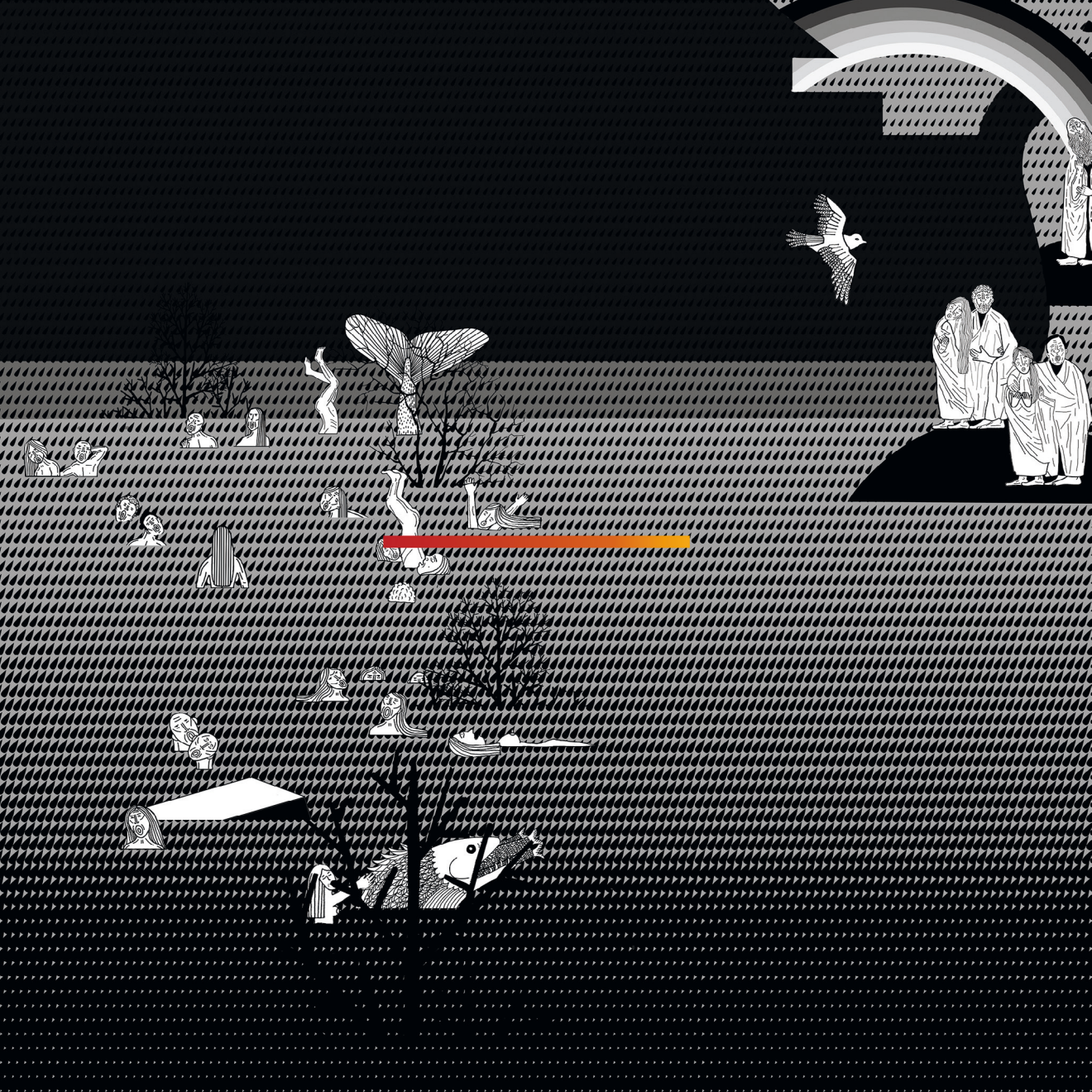
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SOCRATES: *At the Egyptian city of Naucratis, there was a famous old god, whose name was Theuth; the bird which is called the Ibis is sacred to him, and he was the inventor of many arts, such as arithmetic and calculation and geometry and astronomy and draughts and dice, but his great discovery was the use of letters. Now in those days the god Thamus was the king of the whole country of Egypt; and he dwelt in that great city of Upper Egypt which the Hellenes call Egyptian Thebes, and the god himself is called by them Ammon. To him came Theuth and showed his inventions, desiring that the other Egyptians might be allowed to have the benefit of them; he enumerated them, and Thamus enquired about their several uses, and praised some of them and censured others, as he approved or disapproved of them. It would take a long time to repeat all that Thamus said to Theuth in praise or blame of the various arts. But when they came to letters, This, said Theuth, will make the Egyptians wiser and give them better memories; it is a specific both for the memory and for the wit. Thamus replied: O most ingenious Theuth, the parent or inventor of an art is not always the best judge of the utility or inutility of his own inventions to the users of them. And in this instance, you who are the father of letters, from a paternal love of your own children have been led to attribute to them a quality which they cannot have; for this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves. The specific which you have discovered is an aid not to memory, but to reminiscence, and you give your disciples not truth, but only the semblance of truth; they will be bearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality.¹*

Plato, 'The Phaedrus'

What Plato has expressed in the dialogue of Socrates has been called phonocentrism by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida²—the preference of speech over writing. There has been much debate over the primacy of both modes of language, involving a regard for either sight or hearing as the prominent sensory experience and often biased towards speech.³ The linguist Leonard Bloomfield wrote in 1933 that “writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language”.⁴ It would seem that Plato or Aristotle would have agreed. Classical Greek was meant to be recited not read. Manuscripts were of little use without a degree of familiarity with the text. They were written without spaces paragraphs pages or punctuation in a continuous stream of letters called the scriptio continua. Memory was the primary record of information; manuscripts were devices for aiding memory.⁵

Marshall McLuhan has suggested that it was during the Renaissance that a transition was made from a primarily aural way of perceiving the world to a primarily visual one under the influence of printing.⁶ While maintaining this, it has to be acknowledged that there has remained for millennia in Western culture an elevation of sight above the other senses.⁷ “Visionary”, “looking ahead”, “made visible” often occur in speech, but “listening ahead” or “made audible” are seldom written. There are supernatural and divine associations with “light”; “insight” suggests an understanding verging on the profound—the widely used metaphors and linguistic constructs are in the realm of vision. The bias is deep and affects our thought without making itself felt. Perhaps it originates from the conscious experience of seeing,

the simultaneous feeling of being both the observer and the observed;⁸ or from seeing itself—70 percent of the human body's sense receptors cluster in the eyes.⁹ Vision is, scientifically asserted, the dominant sensory experience. The notion of phonocentrism itself seems ironic. It could be that Plato was merely expressing his misgivings about the new technology of writing, through writing.

With the invention of printing during the Renaissance, the literary strain of Latin—which had separated from vernacular forms at about 3rd century A.D.—became established as the lingua franca of scholastic discourse across Europe. Literary texts acquired the crucial responsibility of spreading new knowledge rather than merely aiding its reminiscence; they had to be accessible. Already in the 13th century, manuscripts had been introduced with a navigational structure including chapter divisions, page numbers, alphabetical indices and a table of contents. But they were scripted in Blackletter, which was economical in its narrow letterforms using fewer parchment leaves, also less readable. It was entirely in minuscule, with thick strokes that allowed no finer distinctions of weight and making for a uniform, dense appearance. The library volumes demanded solemn effort to be read, and were certainly not carried around. Incentives to continue this chirographic tradition during the Renaissance were few: paper had become aplenty if yet not cheap, the revival of classicism had spurred interest in antique styles, and there were far too many copies of a single work available for the Renaissance scholar to have studied it with the selfsame mystical fixation of a friar in an poorly stocked

monastic library, to whom the manuscript once gone was probably never seen again. The new book was a rational object, a technology made by Man for the dissemination of knowledge and making it accessible. It was devised in appropriate form by the preeminent printers and typographers of the time—Aldus Manutius, Claude Garamond and Robert Estienne. By the 19th century, Blackletter had all but disappeared, continuing in vestiges in ecclesiastical documents, royal decrees and the insignia of academies and publications who hoped to rekindle images of a romantic mediaeval age, and the legacy of St. Jerome.

Speaking of the book in the present age, there are certain questions that need to be addressed: What is the book? What is this present age; is it modernity, postmodernity, post-postmodernity or something else? What is the state of culture—design and the arts? These questions are important because when the term *book* is used, something is meant. And that meaning is situated within the context of the present age, negotiated by the socio-cultural-economic forces acting on it and inspired by developments in the field of art, design and literature—among others. The term itself originated from the Old English term *bōc*, before 900 A.D. and is cognate with Dutch *boek*, Old Norse *bōk* and German *buch*; it is believed to refer to tree names such as *bēce*—O.E. for beech—where runes were inscribed and tablets made of.¹⁰ The exact point when *bōc* became *book* is not known but it can be reasonably assumed that variations of the term have been in use for well over a millennium to refer to types of written or printed documents. In present usage, *book* tends to be inclusive: a category of physical object,

a literary work, a main division of a classic literary work, a magazine, an imaginary record etc.¹¹

The definition made of *book* in this project is far more exclusive. Here it refers to a physical object consisting in a literary work, which in itself is composed more than 60 percent of literary text.

Illustrated editions of novels, standard novels, autobiographies, scientific literature etc. fall in its scope, but comics, graphic novels, heavily illustrated childrens books, photo-books etc. do not. Nor do notepads, notebooks—blank or written, advertising pamphlets or brochures. The literary work needs to be a standard work of literature. The literary text can be chirographic or typographic in nature, given that it is reproduced in printing and not manually scribed. Indeed, only books that are published or publishable are considered; they need not be commercial. Manuscripts are excluded. Another particularity to be noted is that there is a distinction made between a literary work consisting in a physical object—referred in the text as the book, and a physical object consisting in a literary work—referred to as the BOOK. The former suggests that it is ultimately a work of literature, defined by literary text and that the physical object exists only as an essential extension. In the latter—the definition employed in this project—it suggests that the physical object is principal and that the literary work is an essential feature of it. This distinction is of consequence as it affects how the project is approached. Here, the physical object and literary work are considered independently and collectively under the

goals and aspirations of the project—which is to explore this concept of the book—and are allowed to interact and influence each other. Neither could be said to have determined the other, but following the definition, it was the physical object that was first considered. The length and composition of the text, both literary and image, are determined by it. This will be explained.

This definition of *book* that is used in the project derives from its context. This is no longer an age dependent on memory. The extent of information that is being created is beyond its scope, and fidelity is of consequence. The mnemonic device of extreme exaggeration used in ancient oral traditions does not suit much of what is written now. As McLuhan's aphorism "the medium is the message", the coded message—the text, is only equal in significance to the medium that structures it. Books are relied upon to distribute this message, and make it accessible. This has led to numerous experiments with formats, layout, material and composition all vying for ideal purveyance, while allowing themselves to be attractive. It could be that the literary work consisting in a physical object has been explored to the hilt in the 600 years since the Renaissance. But it has not been upturned.

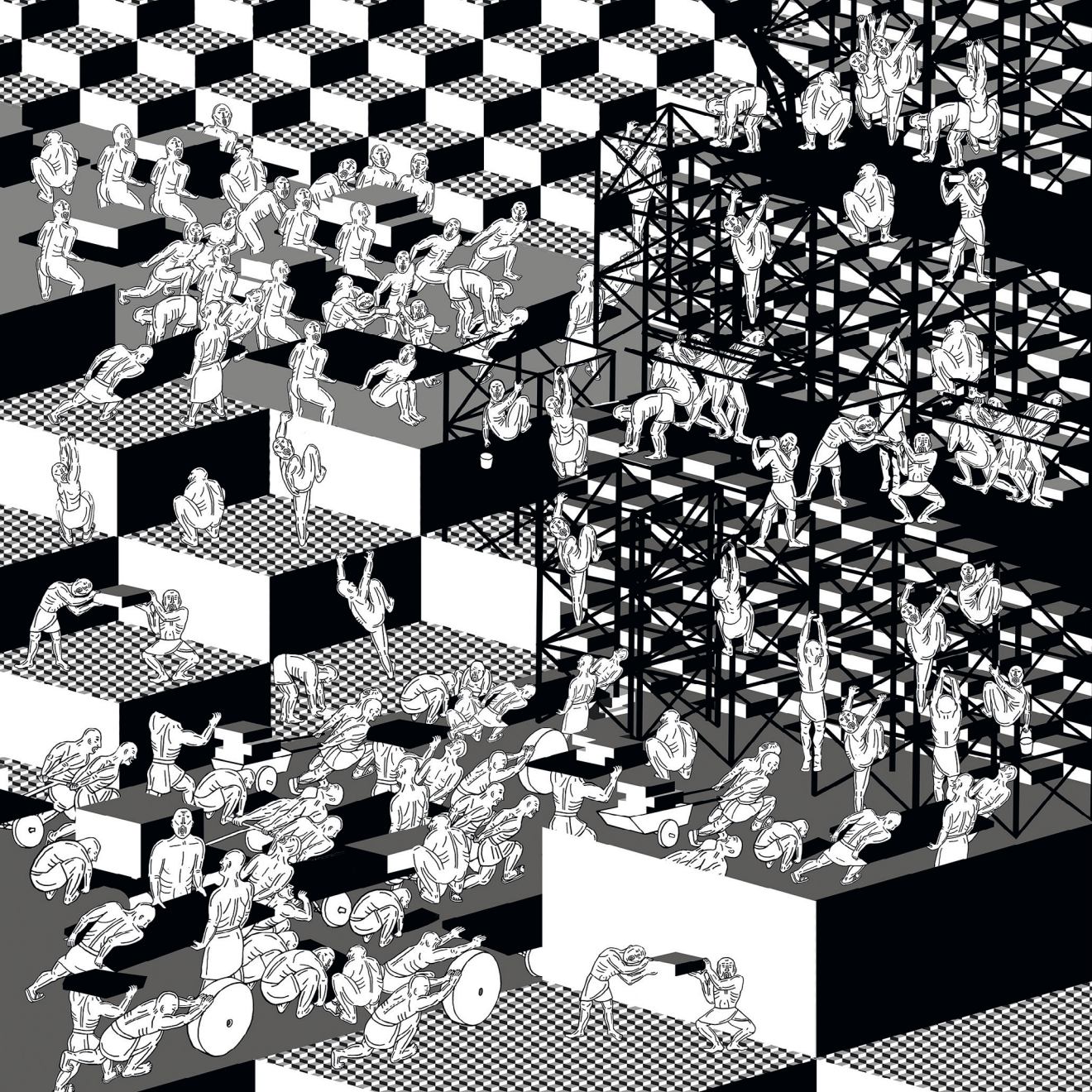
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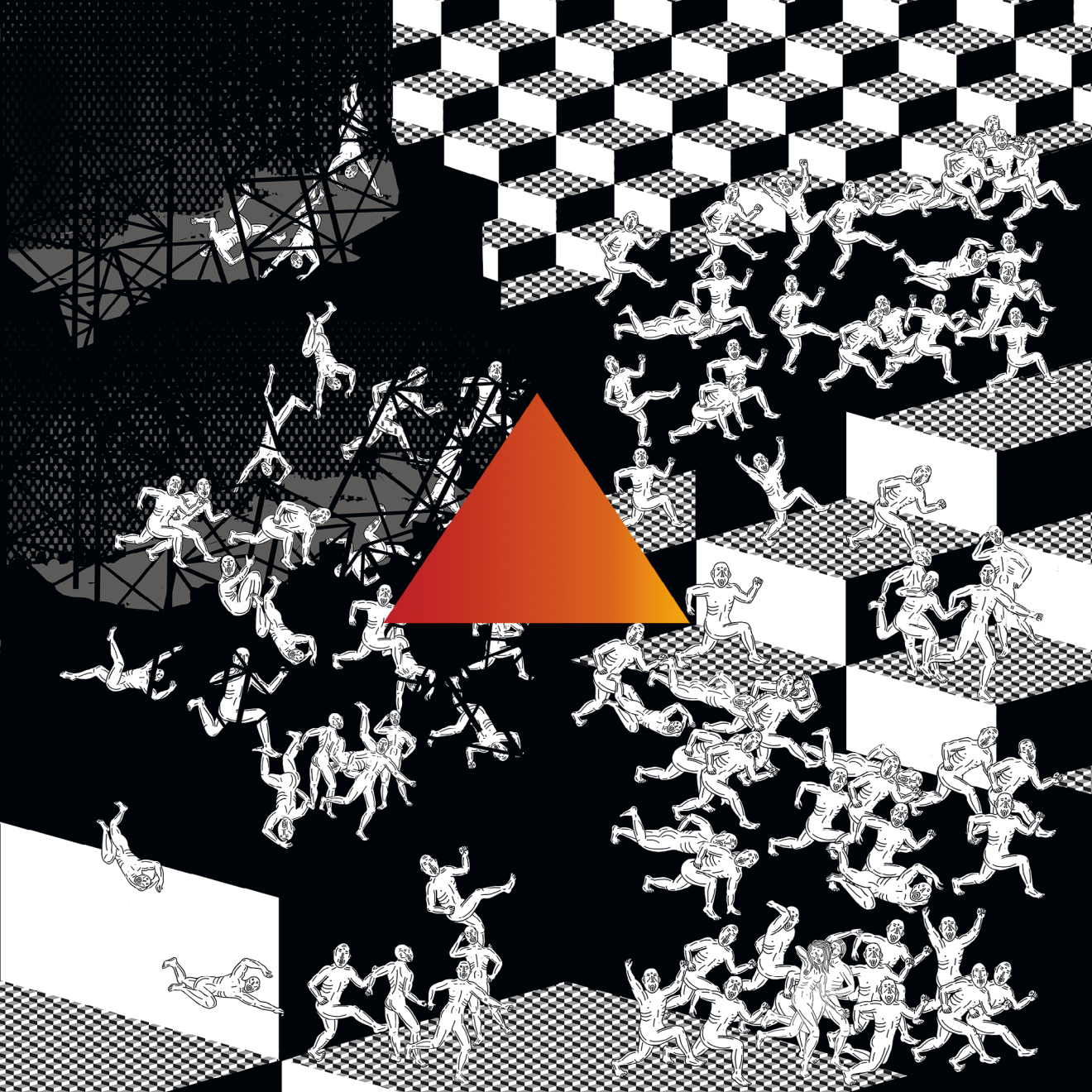
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It took Modernism to question the idea of art. Dadaists were the one to proclaim it aloud with bang and clatter but the question can be traced back to Millet and Courbet. They lived in the early decades of the 19th century, when the technology of photography was nascent. The camera brought a new vision of the world, of reality unbiased and without intellectualisation. It brought an immediate glimpse of the everyday, devoid of forced perspective in a space that was flat and ultimately more nuanced. The image hovered just below the surface. It was disinterested in the subject, it was without ego.

The reality of this image fascinated Courbet. What Goya had hinted with 'The Forge'¹ was developed to an even greater rejection of thematic propriety and composition in 'The Stone Breakers'.² These were not classical models posing self-consciously symbolic of a heroic ideal. Models they were, yet the painting is merely a moment from an uneventful working day of two stone breakers. Beyond representation, the concern was with real life of the times. It was a gaze of the artist upon his world. Courbet was attempting an art rooted in time and reality. He was questioning the hegemony of classical art and the relevance of its idealised mimetic tradition against the optical authenticity of the photograph. In the art that came later under the collective banner of Modern, the machine was the decisive factor; not one machine, not the camera, but the arrival of the 'machine'. It can be heard in three acts:

ACT I:

FORDLÂNDIA

"In 1927, Ford, the richest man in the world, needed rubber to make tires for his cars. In Michigan, and European producers enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the product. Ford decided to grow his own. The site chosen for Ford's new rubber plantation was on the banks of the Tapajós River, a tributary of the Amazon about 600 miles from Ford's home in Dearborn. The place was reached by riverboat from the nearest town. Ford's vision was a model town with sidewalks, tennis courts and even a golf course. There would be no dances every week...Fordlandia would not just make car production more efficient, to turn out goods at an ever faster pace, Ford would also be improving the lives and wealth to American managers and Brazilian laborers alike[...]It might seem like a better but improved North American city, what Ford created was a broiling hell. It was a City than peaceable Dearborn. The American overseers found it hard to live in. It was enough to satisfy their immediate wants. Those who stayed died in large numbers from other tropical afflictions. Prohibition was supposed to be rigorously enforced, but workers headed to the bars and bordellos that sprang up around the plantation. In prohibition, Ford's other rules were also resented, particularly the insistence on formal dress. When a new cafeteria was introduced in place of waiter service, the workers resented it on the property. Meanwhile, some of the Americans brought in to run the plantation died in a nest of crocodiles[...]"³

Ben Macintyre, 'Dearborn-on-Amazon' / The New York Times

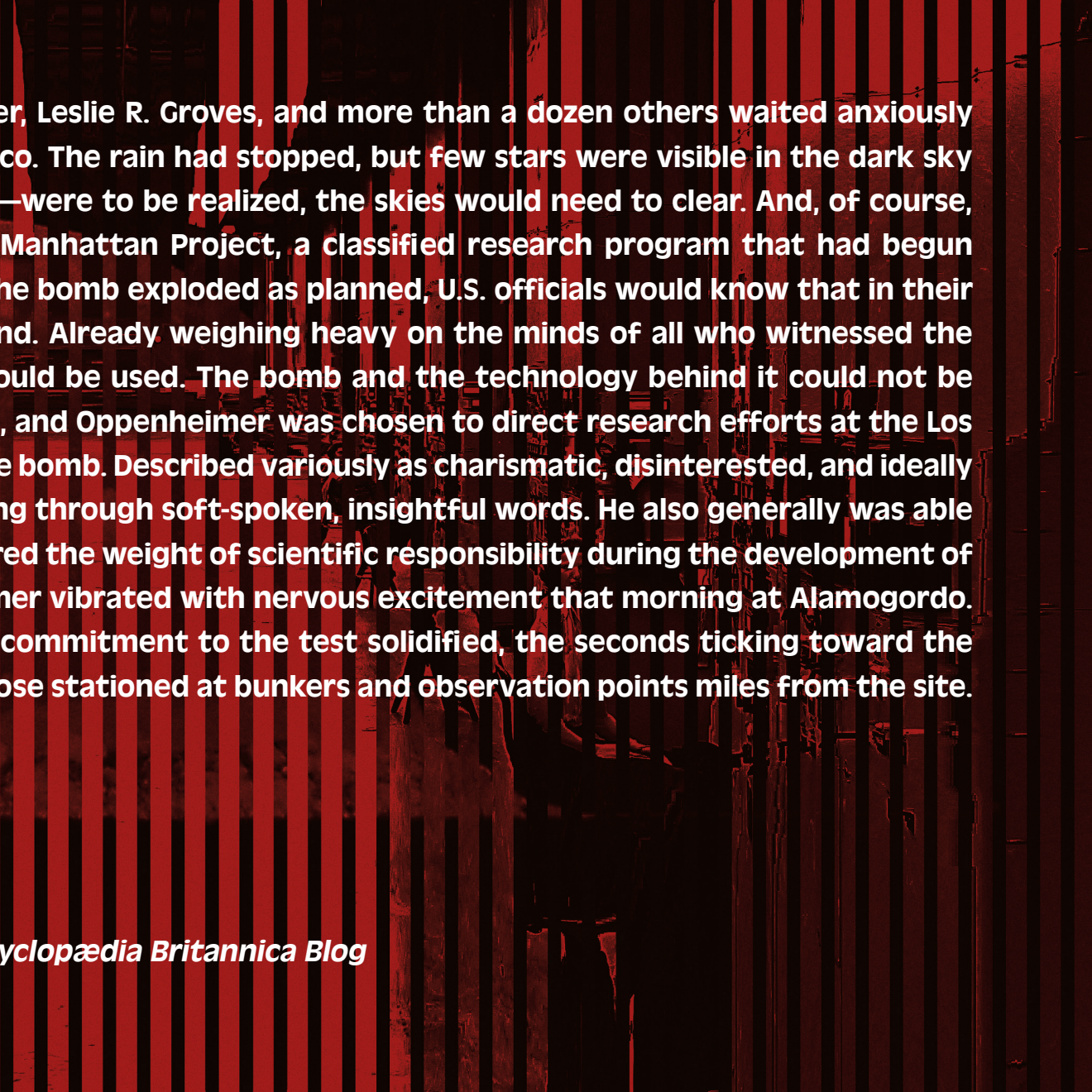
e tires, hoses and other parts for his cars. Rubber does not grow in
ne rubber trade because of their Asian colonies. So, typically, the car
ubber plantation was an area of some 2.5 million acres on the banks
n the Atlantic. It took Ford's agents approximately 18 hours to reach
eplica Midwestern town, with modern plumbing, hospitals, schools,
drink or other forms of immorality, but gardening for all and chaste
n more efficient. By applying the principles of rational organization
ing the lives of those who worked in the new town, bringing health
most emphatically did not work in the jungle. Instead of a miniature
g, pestilential hellhole of disease, vice and violence, closer to Dodge
ard to retain employees, who tended to wander off after earning
large numbers, from viper bites, malaria, yellow fever and numerous
y upheld, but after a day spent hacking at the encircling jungle, the
he site. Knife fights erupted; venereal disease was rife. Along with
mposed diet of brown rice, whole-wheat bread and tinned peaches.
e men rioted, destroying the mess hall and wrecking every vehicle
un the project went mad. One man hurled himself from a boat into a

ACT 2:

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

"In the early morning hours on July 16, 1945, J. Robert Oppenheimer in the main control bunker at the Alamogordo air base in New Mexico above. If the Trinity test—the detonation of the first atomic bomb—they did. The Trinity test marked the point of no return for the three years earlier under the command of the U.S. government. If the hands they held the most devastating weapon known to humankind. Trinity test was the decision of whether or not such a weapon should be kept a secret...Groves was appointed to lead the Manhattan Project at Alamos laboratory, ground zero for the scientific development of the atomic bomb. Oppenheimer, a brilliant physicist, had a way of capturing an audience, of leading them to remove his personal views from the task at hand. Having shouldered the "gadget," as the atomic device was known internally, Oppenheimer's Detonation was set for 5:30 AM. As the overcast skies cleared and the imminent moment seemed to occupy an infinite span of time for the Tensions mounted, uncertainties increased. Then, finally..."⁴

Kara Rogers, 'The Trinity Test: Detonation of the First "Gadget"'/Enc



er, Leslie R. Groves, and more than a dozen others waited anxiously
co. The rain had stopped, but few stars were visible in the dark sky
—were to be realized, the skies would need to clear. And, of course,
Manhattan Project, a classified research program that had begun
the bomb exploded as planned, U.S. officials would know that in their
nd. Already weighing heavy on the minds of all who witnessed the
ould be used. The bomb and the technology behind it could not be
, and Oppenheimer was chosen to direct research efforts at the Los
e bomb. Described variously as charismatic, disinterested, and ideally
ng through soft-spoken, insightful words. He also generally was able
red the weight of scientific responsibility during the development of
ner vibrated with nervous excitement that morning at Alamogordo.
commitment to the test solidified, the seconds ticking toward the
ose stationed at bunkers and observation points miles from the site.

ACT 3:

THE NETWORK

"WIRED: Some say the internet was born on Oct. 29, 1969, when the first message was sent between UCLA and the Stanford Research Institute (SRI). But others say it actually arrived a few weeks earlier, when UCLA set up its ARPAnet machines. You were there. Which is it?

STEVE CROCKER: October. The very first attempt to get some communication between our machine, a Sigma 7, and [Douglas] Engelbart's machine, an SDS-940, at SRI.

Famously, it crashed.

We tried to log in [to the SRI machine]. We had a very simple terminal protocol so that you could act like you were a terminal at our end and

log in to their machine. But the software had a small bug in it. We sent the 'l' and the 'o,' but the 'g' caused a crash.

Their system had the sophistication that if you started typing a command and you got to the point where there was no other possibility, it would finish the command for you. So when you typed 'l-o-g,' it would respond with the full word: 'l-o-g-i-n.' But the software that we had ginned up wasn't expecting more than one character to ever come back. The 'l' was typed, and we got an 'l' back. The 'o' was typed, and we got an 'o' back. But the 'g' was typed, and it wasn't expecting the 'g-i-n.' A simple problem. Easily fixed.

WIRED: And the internet was born?

CROCKER: Some say that this was a single network and therefore not 'the internet.' The ARPAnet was all one kind of router, and it didn't interconnect with other networks. Some people say that the internet was created when multiple networks were connected to each other — that the IP [internet protocol] and TCP [transmission control protocol] work on top of that were instrumental in creating the internet.

The people who worked at that layer, particularly Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn [the inventors of IP and TCP], tend to make a careful distinction

between the ARPAnet and the later expansion into multiple networks, and they mark the birth of the internet from that later point.

But, conversely, the basic design of protocol layers and documentation and much of the upper structure was done as part of the ARPAnet and continued without much modification as the internet came into being. So, from the user point of view, Telnet, FTP, and e-mail and so forth were all born early on, on the ARPAnet, and from that point of view...⁵

Cade Metz, 'Meet the Man Who Invented the Instructions for the Internet' / Wired

The modern age began at the loss of tradition.⁶ It was not affected outright to the frontiers—it still is not, there exists multiple societal structures in contemporaneity. The milieu in which this project exists is identified as being in *late modernity*. The idea was proposed by Anthony Giddens, Scott Lash and Ulrich Beck with the concept of *reflexive modernisation*.⁷ Giddens theorises that “late modern” societies are an extension of the cultural developments and institutional transitions that characterised early forms of modern.⁸ He notes that there was a modernity that has since passed but the forces that shape contemporary society are a continuation of the same: separation of space and time, “disembedding” of social systems and reflexivity.⁹

In this post-traditional age, individuals are faced with a questioning rather than docile acceptance of longstanding cultural norms and traditionally accepted standards of behaviour and societal roles. Tradition, according to Giddens, loses its power and hold over life, both social and personal; the individual becomes the agency of responsibility for action, and information received on these subsequently influence the formation of an identity that is constantly transforming.¹⁰ Reflexive self-identity is one of the key concepts proposed by both Giddens and Bauman.¹¹

A contradictory notion is *postmodernity*—a state or condition of society supposed to exist after *modernity*.¹² The term is often mixed with *postmodernism* which has to be recognised as an intentional 20th century movement in the arts, philosophy and culture that was a reaction

against *modernity*.¹³ Adopting Giddens' view,¹⁴ *postmodernity* is rejected as a condition and 'postmodernism' becomes acknowledged as a high fluctuation within an encompassing modern phase that was a rejection of its utopian ideal and a subversion of the modernist aesthetic: it can be described as commercially invested parody.

There is a further development since the 1990s that argues the passing of the *postmodern* phase.¹⁵ Theories like *post-postmodernism*, *metamodernism*, *post-millennialism*, *performatism*, *automodernity*, *complexism*, *hypermodernity*, *altermodernism*, *pseudo-modernism* and *digimodernism*¹⁶ have been proposed in that assumption, but are yet to reach any consensus. They can be said to describe facets of contemporary culture from individual viewpoints, and failing to represent its entirety. The deluge of trivial participative media programmes that Alan Kirby deplors in *digimodernism*¹⁷ co-exists in present society with the scholarly participative platforms of *hypermodernity*.¹⁸ A return to modernist tendencies is evinced in the products of Apple that embody the authoritative voice that *postmodernism* had strived to undermine. The notion of *design thinking* itself—that Apple has unwittingly become the paradigm of—is interpretable as a modernist ideal tempered with social and ecological realities. The developments are best understood in a rich, evolved condition of *late modernity*.

Design in this context has underwent progressive advancement in meaning from a "trade activity" to a "segmented profession" to a "field for technical research" and a new "liberal art of technological culture".¹⁹ It can be

said to have become democratic, as in Herbert Simon's 1969 definition of the act of DESIGN: "to devise courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones".²⁰ It reflects an understanding of *design* as a *meta-discipline* for all professions.²¹ So graphic DESIGN can be described as DESIGN applied to a professional activity of producing graphic communication; and industrial DESIGN as DESIGN applied to a professional activity of industrial production. It should be noted that the terms design and designer are used here as umbrella terms covering the professional activities of graphic design, industrial design, fashion design, ceramic and glass design, furniture design etc., while DESIGN and DESIGNER are used to call the definition. This unfortunate complication is due to the prevalent usage of the term both in its inclusive sense of a *liberal art* and an exclusive denotation of the traditional *segmented professions*.

This definition can be criticised. It can be argued that it fails to demarcate professional specialisations and makes the study of *design* difficult. But that is a matter of perspective. Mechanical engineering and industrial design can both be seen as industrial DESIGN. The distinction is semantic: industrial design typically denotes the professional activity of devising schema of action aimed at solving socio-cultural problems or exploring opportunities thereof through physical expressions of form concerned with industrial production, while industrial DESIGN can be applied to any of the professional activities associated with industrial production. Industrial design is to industrial DESIGN what architecture is to infrastructure DESIGN.

DESIGN activity is further determined by the process and the philosophy. Two primary process models have been developed: The Rational Model, which is plan-driven and sequential with discrete stages and known constraints and objectives, and The Action-Centric Model, which is improvisational, intuitive, and constitutes reflective practice.²² Philosophies are manifold, they are formed from the socio-political orientation of the DESIGNER or group of DESIGNERS and influenced by broader artistic movements; they can also be adopted for particular projects. However, not every DESIGNER or project is consciously guided by a design philosophy.

In the case of this project, there is a philosophy that has been consciously adopted, and infused with certain concerns on the part of the DESIGNER. The concerns are explored later along with the process itself, but the philosophy can be described as the Zen-modernist synthesis of post-war Japanese design. It first gained international recognition through the work of Isamu Kenmochi, Kenji Ekuan, Sori Yanagi, Issey Miyake, Tadao Ando and Shiro Kuramata. It has endured, evolved post the modern, in the work of Naoto Fukasawa, Kenya Hara and Taku Satoh. Their individual approaches vary, and that is not called upon; the interest is towards the philosophy that underlies and connects their work, a blending of modernist radicalism and Japanese craft traditions that has created a unique, sensitive approach which values intuition more than reason, emotion more than intellection, and structure more than veneer. Exploring this approach presupposes an understanding of Japanese aesthetics and the way of Zen.

Aesthetics can be described as the branch of philosophy concerned with the beautiful.²³ With it lies an interest in the constitution of *beauty*, pursued in formal²⁴ studies of definition and representation. In the Japanese society of old, such compulsions of an *ideal* kind were conspicuously absent. What Classical Greek attempted through mimesis, was attempted in emulation—imitating the means of nature rather than its forms.²⁵ It was concentrated on the process, emphasising structure and purposiveness derived from the natural standard where existence was in harmonious flux.²⁶ *Beauty* was observed in the realities of life.²⁷ It was not theorised, but perceived in categories of aesthetic experience socially approved as *tastes*.²⁸ The distinctions were keen; all experience could be classified in systems of partite refinement like the *shin-gyō-sō*, which notes nine levels of formality between the formal-formal *shin* and the informal-informal *sō*.²⁹ Such eloquence was capable only of a culture extremely aesthetic.

When Zen³⁰ became prominent in Muromachi Japan,³¹ the arts were not affected, writes Katō Shūichi—"Zen became the art".³² The confluence gave rise to a cult of the rustic, the imperfect and the ephemeral. Its mode of experience was intuitive awareness, transcribed in aesthetic terms such as *aware*—"a deep, empathetic appreciation of the ephemeral beauty manifest in nature and human life",³³ out of which emerged concepts like *yūgen*—profound grace; *wabi*—aesthetic of rusticity; and *sabi*—patina of age, isolation.³⁴ Emptiness was accorded a spiritual significance—an implication of the Zen enlightenment ideal of a state of formless non-being,³⁵ symbolised by the *ensō*, a circle accomplished in a fluid stroke

of the brush. *Ensō* is the icon of the Zen/Japanese aesthetic: an unremarkable yet elegant depiction of great simplicity that expresses a subjective awareness of the non-subjective and brimming with meaning left unspoken.

The years that followed the Meiji Restoration³⁶ of the late 19th century brought the sequestered aesthetic culture into contact with modern industry, thus violating its tranquil realms with washes of electric light and blaring city-noises. In the aftermath of the war, this however synthesised into a sophisticated culture of design in the eminent hands of a new breed of industrial craftsmen who looked forward to international expressions of a modern new age while firmly rooted in the handicraft traditions of their homeland. In their work, the aesthetic terminology developed new meanings: Miyake—Pleats Please, Kuramata—Glass Chair and Tanaka—Nihon Buyo Posters.

The later oeuvre of Fukasawa and Hara are particularly rich in emptiness, *ensō* and *yugen*. Fukasawa describes a design that is “unnoticeable”, settled in “unseen outlines” of ecology and culture and impelling behaviour “without thought”.³⁷ Hara adds his own idea about “re-designing” the familiar, making them “unknown”, leading to an “awakening” of the way they are perceived.³⁸ They delve into the delicate boundaries that delineate objects from themselves and the environment. Here the book is begun to be explored.

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16. Revised term for 'pseudo-modernism'
24. Official of manner
30. Japanese school of Buddhism focused on intuitive insight, contemplation and meditation. Origins from Chinese Chán
35. The enlightenment state defies explanation by its very nature. A close attempt would be: an emptiness that is nothing and nothing that it is not
36. A period of rapid industrialisation and opening to Western influences after long years of cultural and economic seclusion

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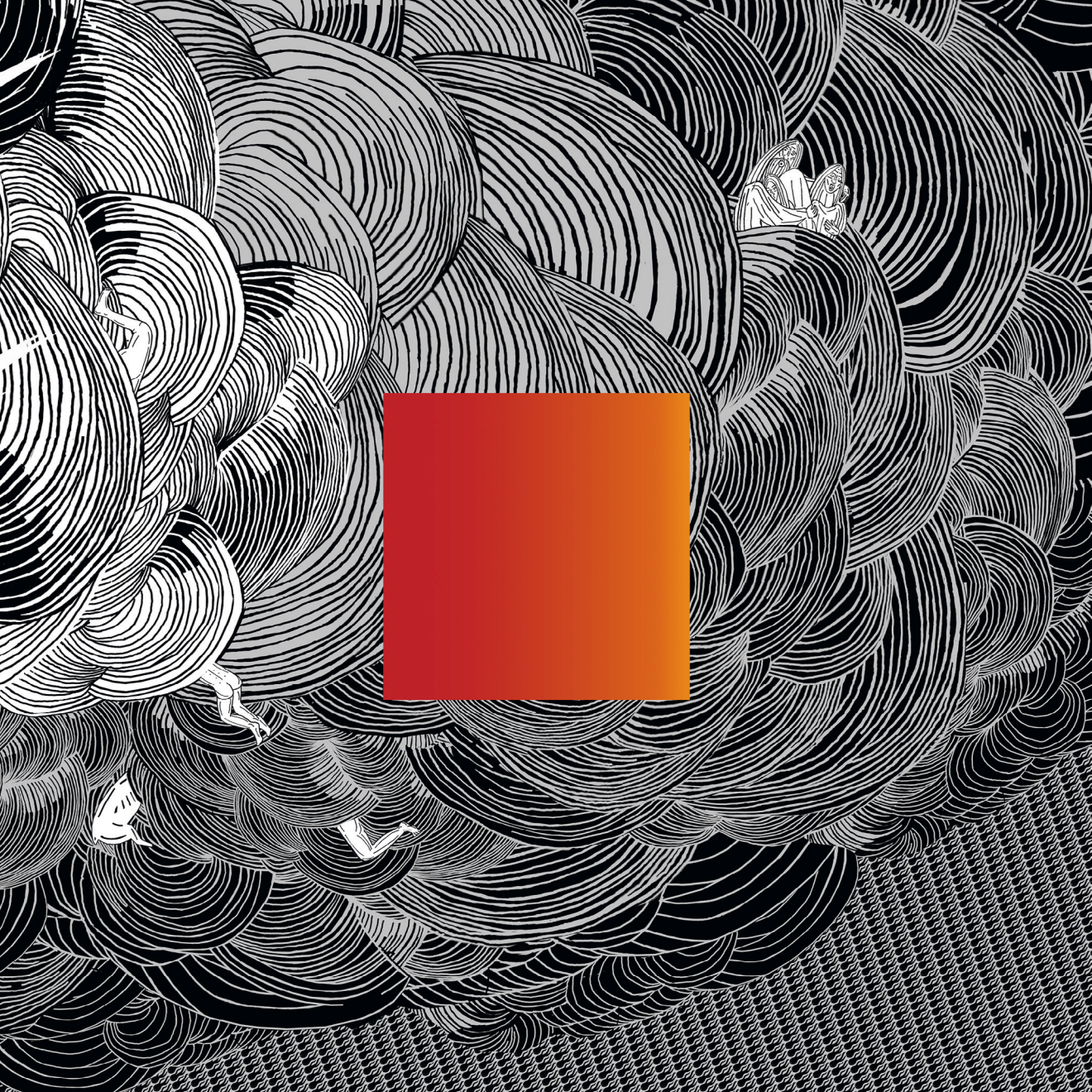
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***THE POINT AT WHICH A BOOK
CEASES TO BE.***

*B*efore setting about to construct the book that is a physical object consisting in a literary work, the other notion of the book—a literary work consisting in a physical object—needs to be destructed. It needs to be identified when a book ceases to be a book and is made a new object. From that understanding of the transition of states, the process is rightly commenced. Be noted that this is not an ontological destruction¹—that would be too rational an approach, the appropriate way here is to unravel a perceptual, intuitive understanding of books. The greater semantic description has already been made, and reason needs to be compromised with intuition in a Zen-modernist process. A typical form is observed in the writing of Kenya Hara. From his 'Designing Design':

‘Let’s take a long, cool look at paper as a material. As a medium, paper has assumed great responsibility. Especially with the recent speeding up of the circulation of information, we could view paper, prior to its consideration as a material, a kind of unconscious surface, always right there for us, as a neutral, white surface, whether we were writing a letter with a fountain pen, or printing out a photograph from a computer. A white screen that is efficient sized (in Japan, at one to the square root of two), its materialistic aspect paid scant attention, paper was understood as an abstract medium that carries images and letters. The esteem we place in paper, one of the world’s three greatest inventions, is also no doubt of this very nature as a neutral medium and not for the materiality that so pleases the fingertips when it brushes against something natural. So it was when monitors became the norm that people, completely disregarding the appeal and nature of paper, started using the term ‘paperless.’

If we look at it from this perspective, it maybe that today, paper, stepping down from the principle role of medium, and freed from practical duties, can once again be allowed the charming behaviour of its intrinsic nature: as material.”²

Consider the book:

The paper, the ink.

The binding, glue/sewing/thread, cloth/board/leather/plastic.

The letters, the imagery, symbols, punctuation.

The weight, the smell, texture, sheen.

The ruffling and sliding of pages.

The colours, the light.

The discourse.

The story/plot, the theory, description.

The concept.

The idea is the root of the literary work. It is structured into the plot, sequence of events, description or theory. At this stage it is an abstraction. It is made accessible through the discourse. But it is not quite yet literature.³ It is a discussion, one-sided communication in writing or speech. When coded in literary text, it becomes literature. The literature is given material form in typography. It can also be reproduced chirography against a blank screen, on which script incidentally becomes typographic script. The material type is then printed to create a record. The printing in this case can also be etching, engraving, embossing, debossing, die-cutting, montage etc. It can be made on a single extended sheet of paper; smaller sheets of paper; parchment, cloth, polymer; three dimensional solids like boxes, spheres, cylinders; found objects like lampshades, chairs, cans, barrels, bottles, pencils etc. If the literature is spread across multiple

objects such, they can be arranged to afford coordinated reading. An arrangement of sheets of paper, engraved pencils, or a single box read across six faces. One page or many pages. The page can be considered as a surface marked with type. A pencil could have a single page or three pages depending on whether it is circular or triangular. A box could have six. In an arrangement of engraved pencils, each becomes a unit. In the case of sheets of printed paper, each becomes a leaf—a specified kind of unit. The unit is the smallest physically independent division in the arrangement.

Does this arrangement form a book?

There are two ways to this arrangement. The type can be set to the face of a box, spanned across boxes, then subsequently arranged. In the second way, the literary work is typeset to the faces of a predetermined arrangement of boxes. Boxes adapted to type or type adapted to boxes. An arrangement evolved from type or type evolved from arrangement. Then, if an arrangement in the second way is deconstructed and the type grafted to new boxes of the same order, and it fits the same number of boxes, does it become an arrangement in the first way? And what about reconstruction? If the arrangement of boxes is deconstructed and constructed again from its constituents, is it the same arrangement? The initial suggestion would be an inevitability towards an arrangement in the first way, as type cannot be altered, giving it precedence. But this is not a precondition as any transformation of type excluding textual changes is of no greater significance to the literary work than the arrangement of

boxes. Both arrangements can be made. The new is distinguished from the old by the 'process' and not by the product. They are never the same. Even a reconstruction in the same way creates a new arrangement; they are perhaps not identified without knowledge of the process—that is the crisis of interpretation. Is a lamp not a lamp if not interpreted such? Accounting for the multitudes who may interact with it, the object widely interpreted as a lamp might be said to exist in multiplicity. A sculpture, lamp and unknown object situated simultaneously in time and collapsed in space. It may be assumed that the object as a percept⁴ conforms to the concepts⁵ of lamp and sculpture, to the same subject in different degrees—wherein a choice has been registered consciously or subconsciously—or in exclusive capacities to each subject. In the objective sense, it is no more a lamp than a sculpture. In a true sense, it is unknown.

The unknown true nature of objects is a perspective on reality itself, one among several gravitating towards a central tendency to perceive the world in terms of phenomena, and disacknowledging their origins.⁶ The breadth of this outlook may be labelled empiricism, or somewhat appropriately—phenomenalism, but therein is suggested a fundamental criticism of realism and aversion to physical reality, which being valid, does not remain fundamental to all. To this case, the influence is particularly Kantian; mixed with that is a somewhat conflicting quantum mechanical worldview⁷—what can be surmised of it. The others vary from acute scepticism in the manner of Hume to reasoned positivism. Pursuit of that, the multifarious, is beyond the scope of this undertaking.

What then is an *object*? The answer as construed from a Kantian⁸ point of view would be—something experienced from the human standpoint.⁹ But what is a *thing*? It lapses into circular argument.

TAKE 2: What is an object?

A simple formal definition is provided by the Oxford Dictionaries—"a thing external to the thinking mind or subject."¹⁰ The American College Dictionary phrases it as "anything that may be presented to the mind: objects of thought."¹¹ In a further erudite vein, the philosopher E. J. Lowe details on the thing: "'Thing', in its most general sense, is interchangeable with 'entity' or 'being' and is applicable to any item whose existence is acknowledged by a system of ontology, whether that item be particular, universal, abstract or concrete. In this sense, not only material bodies but also properties, relations, events, numbers, sets, and propositions are—if they are acknowledged as existing—to be accounted 'things'."¹²

Object and thing are largely replaceable terms which in a general sense contrast with subject, and refer to a fundamental concept in philosophy that is less articulately defined than it is understood.¹³ Usage of either of the terms, or entity, unit, being or individual tend to fall into two categories: an abstract, universal and formal concept of objecthood indifferent to materiality, or the more restrictive notion based on Aristotelian substance.¹⁴ The former is concordant with the transcendental deduction¹⁵ and can be drawn upon to derive its predicate of things that are "categories of human thought and talk";¹⁶ the latter is incompatible, belonging to a manifestly

different system of axioms and concepts with no hope of meaningful synthesis or positioning.

An object is thus an object of thought or an object of experience. Is it real? Does it possess actual existence?

The empiricist line of thought, progressing through Locke and Berkeley, arrived at the argument that "all knowledge is ultimately founded in experience" and "if actually all [...] knowledge is derived from perception, there is no meaning in the statement that the things really exist": "to be perceived is identical with existence."¹⁷ Hume subsequently attempted to establish the ultimacy of impressions and ideas of the mind, dismissing all metaphysical enquiry as purporting to "penetrate into subjects utterly inaccessible to the understanding", and "depending more upon Invention than Experience."¹⁸ He also remained in some measure reprobative of the work of his modern antecedents, regarding their theories as "speculative" and ungrounded in human reality.¹⁹ In his view, the study of human nature needed critical reassessment in the scientific method of Newton; and this was pursued beginning with the 'Treatise of Human Nature' and onto a series of Essays and Enquiries.²⁰

Particular among the concerns and source of intellectual strife in the work of Hume was the logical inference of causation, presumed irreproachable in Western philosophical thought since Aristotle.²¹ The demonstrative certainty of this comes followed by that based on induction and scientific

experimentation was less inherent in his experientially constructed universe, and the connection between the two a process of the mind. On the cause, he essayed: "[...]is an object, followed by another, where all the objects similar to the first are followed by objects similar to the second".²² Reducing all nature and sequence of events thus to a narrowly defined category of external impressions, objects and their behaviour became abstract. Their material existence was denied or rendered invalid, inconsequential. An explanation of their origins was later proposed by Immanuel Kant, in 'The Critique of Pure Reason'.

Kant brought together the empiricist and idealist narratives to describe reality as a uniquely human experience that was absolutely real in that it was all that we were concerned with, but without denying the potential of an alternate understanding from the standpoint of intuitive intellect.²³ This alternate mode, though inaccessible and unassailable to human cognition, provided an abstract ground for exploring the concept of the object-in-itself, separating it from the object-of-experience—the actual and the experiential individuated from the Humean field of pure thought. There are however different ways in which Kant's text is interpreted, broadly categorisable into two: the Two-Worlds and the Two-Aspects.²⁴

The Two-Worlds interprets transcendental idealism—the central thesis expounded in the Critique—as a metaphysical distinction made between a world of appearances and of objects-in-themselves.²⁵ The Two-Aspects is an intertwinement of metaphysical and epistemological readings, one

that recognises the aforementioned as two sets of aspect-properties contained in the object, and another that interprets them as two viewpoints on the object.²⁶ In this latter, epistemological interpretation, humans are essentially restricted to the subjective viewpoint and the nature of objects-in-themselves and ourselves as detached from our sensible intuition remains unknown.²⁷

Objects-of-experience are then real, but not necessarily actual. They cannot be said to exist in the absence of a human spectator; as representations, they exist in the mind. When object or thing is mentioned, the experiential is meant; the object interpreted as a lamp is a mental representation that conforms to the meta-representation lamp.²⁸ In an objective sense, it is a delineation of empirical evidence. Two spectators upon the same empirical evidence form distinct mental representations informed by prior experience and cultural inheritance. The empirical evidence itself remains intact, and constant to all humankind.²⁹

An arrangement of type set to the faces of a box, extended across boxes, and another of type set to a predetermined extension of boxes are both books. They originate from the concept having taken its flight of fantasy in literary form and subsequently designated to physical units forming some manner of arrangement. Shuffling the post-literary sequence of their creation or transforming typography does not alter their primal state. To unmake a book, literature need be deconstructed. All that remains is vacuous form and disembodied concept. Neither is a book.

TO MAKE A BOOK.

Is it even possible? The project of creating a physical object consisting in a literary work exploring physical objects consisting in literary works. The first instance is invention. Inventing something and making an instance of that invention that is about the invention itself is a self-referential tangle. The first books or films were not about book or film. Seldom is a book or film even about books or films. It is more about the joy or agony of making one, the struggles and aspirations of its partisans. Is this process even extendable to fantastical creations, the fable—can a fable be told about fables? Or is it decreed by some irreproachable property of the universe that auto-referential artefacts³⁰ be limited to certain categories?

Here lies an assumption: while a song is easily imagined about songs, a war documentary is not very easily conceived about war documentaries. With some difficulty a chair can be imagined about chairs—an archetypal object channeling all that is a chair and reflecting on its own chair-ness. But a form of narrative media defined by its documenting of a certain activity, could that be about another—even itself? Is it naive in assuming that an auto-referential artefact of this variety would violate its own norms, or is the association of the archetypal object with the auto-referential flawed to begin with? Either be the case, and whether it be or not that such artefacts are limited to certain categories, it is assumed here that a book about book is possible.

There's also something more. The BOOK here is not merely about *BOOK* but equally about the making of itself. It is a physical object consisting in a

literary work exploring its own nature through the process of its making. It is a self-reflexive artefact that is the first of its kind. How is it made?

Characteristics of the BOOK:

1. The BOOK is primarily a physical object.
2. It includes in essentiality, a work of literature.
3. The literary work and the physical object are affected by each other; they interact.
4. The literary work and the physical object are inseparable.

The idea is the foundation of the physical object. The idea here—
A physical object that is read. Not a physical object that can be read, for laden with type anything can be read—reading here referring to the decoding of literary text. Here is a physical object that establishes reading as one of the essential modes of interacting with it. But it is not just read. It is a tangible, palpable physical object embodying a concept. And reading is an interpretative mode available to only those familiar with the alphabet and the means of constructing from it socially reflected structures of meaning.

to those without, and without the concept-percept association made accessible through an understanding of the process, possibly it is sculpture.

The idea is developed into a concept, an abstracted representation of the object to be built, or a schematic. It can be visualised or verbalised. The idea of "physical object that is read", differentiated against "literary work made to physical object". Physical first and literature second. But how is the physical schemed ahead of literature?

PHYSICAL OBJECTLITERARY WORK

<i>Constructed in 3 dimensions</i>	<i>Conceived in 2 dimensions</i>
<i>Has girth, weight</i>	<i>Surface, insubstantial</i>
<i>Smell and sound</i>	<i>Odourless, soundless</i>
<i>Causes tactile sensations</i>	<i>Non-sensational</i>
<i>Palpable and tangible</i>	<i>Intangible</i>
<i>Incorrigible</i>	<i>Corrigible, changed</i>
<i>Destructible, deformable</i>	<i>Destructible, non-deformable</i>
<i>Decayable on exposure to elements</i>	<i>Not subject to elements</i>
<i>Exerts thrust</i>	<i>Neutral</i>

THE CONCEPT

At first sight, there is a dilemma. Yet it has little to do with causality than a customary allegiance to the traditional notion of books, to literature, and to technology. There are celebrated physical counterparts to many a literary work, the *divine* artefact, objects with much history embedded in their circumstance, artefacts with stories to tell. But for all their sheen and aura of mystique, the books are still literary works cobbled up—or crafted into—physical objects, at times the latter wielding the more powerful cultural influence of the two. If that notion is suppressed, and the part of literature understated for the time being, the task at hand is clearly envisaged as a thorough conceptualising of the book and devising the schema for its construction. For this, the framework of the project could be revisited.

Objectives:

1. To form an alternate view of *books* as designed objects, fully realised in their physicality, and interconnected to the literature they hold within; to explore the nuances of this container-contained relationship, and scale the boundaries of the established mould; to attempt a new kind of *book* that is primarily a physical object and the literary work only consisted in it, an essential part.
2. To construct this in terms acceptable for a Master's Thesis in the Arts, with all the requirements in place, and in a format the university deems suitable for submission.
3. To contribute to the fledgling realm of practice-led research by

suggesting methods and practices hitherto under-explored and construing the work of the artist-craftsman to the structures of non-fictional literature.

4. To contribute to the publishing industry, in its times of change, by invoking a meaningful reinterpretation of the mass-published book.

Constraints:

1. The project has to be completed in an ideal span of 2 years and a maximum of 4.
2. The literature has to comply with university requirements and standards.
3. The outcome has to be accessible physically and virtually—albeit with reduced effect—at the library, and elsewhere in a portable format.
4. The portable format is durable and easily reproduced, adhering to the ethos of industrial production and subject to production runs and budgetary allocations. The first run here is 10 pcs at an estimated cost of €50/pc, including handling.
5. The outcome and format have to be approachable to a non-academic audience.

The incipient idea of “physical object that is read” is an artful one, but critically lacking of precision and alluding to much that is not intended. Having served its initiatory duty, the phrasing is best replaced at this outset with the more articulate definition—“physical object consisting in a literary work”. The importance of the foregoer was in representing the

original vision in its essence, before the idea was subjected to semantic deliberations and transmuted in the process. In its simplicity, it was also capable of evoking a more intimate picture of the project. But now after the milieu and purpose has been established, the process has to move past and on.

What kind of a concept, for the book and starting with the physical object, would meet all objectives and remain within the constraints? It certainly is not large and bulky, or detached with several independent moving parts. It cannot be fixated to an engine or be a digital device powered with batteries as that would all be too cumbersome to maintain, and resource-inefficient in their consumptiveness. A gossamer, satin-threaded roll of woven type would not be too ideal either, perhaps no ordinary Jacquard loom could produce it, and regardless it lies forbidden at the extravagant expense of its manufacture. The budget of €50-a-piece is ample funding for bravura experimentation at the workshop, but it seems not much when brought out to the world with its fluctuating financial demarcations and needs of industrial production. The options that be largely combine economic, durable material with agile production. Obvious would be on-demand printing, on paper or in 3d, or another which could cater to swift production runs without making drastic demands on manual labour. Possibly, another type of computer aided manufacturing. But it would add nothing at all to the spirit of this project to craft unique versions of objects by any combination of mechanical and manual effort. It is neither befitting the means of the modern age, without justifiable reason, nor convenient for

adoption. Besides, the skills required for any success with such a method are vested in time, and to that extent, unattainable within the life span of this project, not without compromise towards the foundational research or writing exercise.

To pick between 3d fabrication and printing-press is simple. It is tempting to pursue the former, enjoying its glory-day and much hyped in consequence—certainly it offers more in the way of creative possibility. The latter is restrictive and ultimately results in the physical semblance of a book of some manner. Which makes more sense? In actual terms, there is hardly a choice as no known 3d printing service offers objects of a suitable size—or accessibility—produced at the allocated unit price. But assuming there is one, does the array of available materials and finishing options prove a viable candidate?

The concept resembling a book, and printed on paper.

Multiple arguments can be invoked in favour of this. The first would be its unassuming manner. If the book were to look like an artistic singularity along the sidelines, it would be potent in creating a diversion, but to mistaken effect. This project is about an idea that could contribute to a cause; it is not to be indulgent or oblique beyond a measure that allows for some artistic exploration. At best, it is to be presented as something familiar, representative of its subject. What better than the archetypical book?

Then—accessibility and approachability. Interlocutors should be made to feel comfortable while interacting with the object. They should intuitively know what to flip and where to turn. They should be able to progress swiftly. Type should be set in large enough point sizes, with legible character-faces, and readable leading. No accessories or attachments might be needed for operation. Books in softcover or hardcover are easily perused and carried around, indestructible under normal use or decay wrought upon by the elements. They are even the easiest to store and transport.

A third argument can be made regarding industrial production, the convenience and affordability of self-publishing, the ease with which a production run of a few copies can be scaled to hundreds. To draw a parallel to 3d-printed objects, the technique could be replaced by injection-moulding when the numbers mount copious, but the investment is not quite comparable to an upgrade from on-demand digital to offset press. Admittedly, this is not much of a concern as this book is designed for a limited run—an estimated. ten in circulation and never more than thrice of that—but ease and efficiency, the choice of material—paper and card stock in a few weights—are sufficient to favour the production method. The finished objects—paperbacks, photobooks and journals—increasingly resemble their mass-published counterparts, notwithstanding some paucity of texture and finish. The same is not said of on-demand 3d printing on an affordable scale.

The concept X.

Is there another appropriate form for the concept? What could be plausible in deriving symbolic associations from the idea? Probably:

- ▶ Inverting the container-contained relationship.
- ▶ Literal self-reflection: something that looks upon itself quite formally. A mirrored artefact. Self-reflexive sculpture.
- ▶ Fierce rejection of the established mould; provocative.

A small box with rolls of paper squeezed in and barely-fitting. Books with part of the text missing as the pages run out. An ephemeral gadget that relapses with each operation. A plastic mosaic which can be rearranged to create different narratives. A typewriter which impresses an arbitrary character upon a specific keystroke. A compact disc with markings that gives improbable readings—it's not clear whether the markings themselves or the disc contents are to be considered. An application that constantly changes its contents, while it is being read, a never ending conceit of a narrative.

The last does not qualify as it is virtual. The others all have their own merits and drawbacks, and there are many others yet to be pondered, but the essential argument against most would be that there is too much physical artifice. The focus is drawn to the product than the process, and in themselves they are all idiosyncratic. What does one benefit

from them, something of an inspiration? There is a lot of subjective interpretation to be performed before they could contribute to enterprise. They are like art; emotional rather than rational, at times abstruse; never making an argument.

It is most appropriate to make this book in the image of a book and draw attention to its process. The similarity is limited to external appearance and physical build. It is symbolic and part of the everyday. Now, does the object have to be constructed in paper? Why not a splendid acrylic figure with inked transparent-cel sheets? That would be formally self-reflective and revealing. Arguably it could result in no boundaries at all, the type, sheets and covers blended seamlessly to form a semi-physical, semi-abstract *thing*. Rendered merely in reflections and refractions, it also transcends normal physicality to pure, brilliant sensuality. But it could also be less inviting. Nonetheless it is a fascinating prospect, no less and perhaps more impactful than a printed, bound book. The economical and technical implications of its production would however preclude it from being feasible. The printed-on-paper, self-published physical semblance of a traditional book is simply the best choice. What possibilities does it offer?

The most obvious would be shape and format. What kind of a book should it look like? The archetype would be a 5½" × 8½" paperback. But that's almost too omnipresent, its physicality having become invisible, retreated to the backdrop. The book should be more triumphant of its worldly manifestation. It should be ostentatious in modest ways. The first

thing that a spectator might notice is that it is a book—mistakenly so—but among books it should hold sway with an air of ambiguity. Is that a photobook? Certainly that couldn't be a novel, could it? If the portrait is flipped sideways into landscape, it's almost always something to do with art or photography, inviting participation with a pencil or paint. What of a square book? It is seldom seen—a truly square book. Most of them are still probably photobooks or graphic manuals. Yes, they do tend to be on the visual side. There are a few, tinier ones on Eastern spirituality too. What about a medium-sized square book, perhaps between 7" × 7" and 9" × 9"? The self-publishing service Blurb offers 7" × 7". It's a comfortable size to hold, easily grabbed by the corner, read with just one hand. As long as it's not too bulky—that would cause the binding to lose its tenacity; the book would bend over backwards, hinging on the centrefold. A few hundred grams would be ideal, translating to a thickness of less than half an inch. That would be a quaint little object. Declarative as a book can be in pure physical form.

So, a 7" × 7" square format weighing about 150g, 0.3–0.5" thick.

The paper could be matte or uncoated, crisp, and not too heavy. Glossy is hardly recommendable for anything to be read. It is pleasant and vibrant on photos, but with the downside of fewer viewing angles. Any bend or curvature on the paper would result in undue glares and concealment of imagery. It is not even too much in fashion these days, with water-resistant finishes available for most paper types. Matte and uncoated both bring

out the texture of paper, even if it indeed is very smooth, and make for a comfortable read. Uncoated is likely the most pleasing to touch and linger on, but is more susceptible to damage. Matte in many ways is delectable too, there is something modern about it, and the velvety finish reminds of tender leaf-buds. Selecting between them would depend on the colour of the paper, its thickness and character, and aesthetic preference. With the particular Japanese stylistic undercurrent, it is inviting to go for the rustic and the raw, the uncoated with hints of Wabi³¹. Two comparable stocks are on offer at Blurb: 148 gsm uncoated and 118 gsm semi-matte. Seemingly a standard among self-publishing services and on-demand printers. The mention of Blurb is because it is the most articulate in terms of how the service is designed, and the tools provided for easy book creation; it is not necessarily the final choice of production, but at this stage it seems very likely.

The 148 gsm uncoated is slightly too thick for non-graphic work, but the eggshell texture and ultra-white luminance are materially rich. This is a paper to acknowledge while leafing through, it is prominent, and the brushing on the fingers unmistakable. The 118 gsm is not a bad choice, it is a standard and while not remarkable to feel, familiar and soothing. But it has the problem of low opacity. The other side of the leaf often shows through, an undesirable effect. It is better to pick the thicker stock.

So, a 7" × 7" square format weighing about 150g, 0.3–0.5" thick with 148 gsm paper stock. The binding could be done in hardcover or softcover,

also not bound at all. There is no reason not to as that would only pose unnecessary difficulties for handling, partially but not best solved by filing in a document holder. Among the binding options, hardcover is not necessary as sturdiness or durability are not accentuated concerns. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, it is even clunky to be employed at such size and thickness. A softcover, perfect bound is better. Saddle-stitching could also have been considered had the thickness been less than 0.2".

With this configuration, there could be approximately 75 leafs or 150 pages. It is not an improbable number, but it is most resource efficient to lay it out in octavo or sextodecimo volumes—16 or 32 page signatures. Each signature refers to the number of pages that an original sheet of paper has been folded into. The largest are usually 4 page signatures or folio volumes. They are above 10" in height and reserved for large format architecture or photography books. Paperbacks are usually printed on quartos, falling between an approximate 5" and 9". It is difficult to identify the sheet-sizes that most on-demand printers and self publishers use, but they can be expected to conform to long-established standards. Hence, a 7" × 7" format is printed either on 9 octavo volumes to produce 144 pages or on 5 sextodecimos, to produce 148 pages. Based on page size, octavos are a closer match.

So, a 7" × 7" square format weighing close to 170g, about 0.5" thick, with 144 pages of 148 gsm uncoated ultra-white stock. That is rather dense for a master's thesis. To contain more than 100 pages of text. Yet it is

absolutely necessary. Any less and the impression would be too slight. The pages are a consequence of the design requirement that the book be robust and solid. An alternate way would be to limit the number of leafs, and the number of pages, by making each leaf robust and stout. But that would also make the whole frame rather rigid, like a clumsy assortment of cardboard leafs. They cannot be bound very easily, not flipped or safely read upside down, lest a page shall fall and dent one's face. It is not in the spirit of good industrial design to attempt such a perilous undertaking. The 72 leafs are an integral component of the design.

The next step is to introduce literature. Its specifications largely emerge from the physical object, but it would also affect the other in turn. To begin with, the 72 leafs and the 144 pages provide the groundwork—a frame for the literary work. But it needs to be decided how the pages themselves are structured. How much of text does each page contain? Does it vary? What ratio of images? Then onto typesetting—what typeface to use, how big the characters, what orientation and layout? Also, questions regarding tonality and colour. To attempt all this meaningfully, the process needs to be in place.

THE PROCESS

There are numerous ways to write. One would be to plan everything beforehand, to put forth a structure and sequential table of contents, and to follow that thoroughly. Another would be to explore the vague idea in the mind, without writing it down until a certain clarity is attained and the plot defines itself. Among others, there is the way of forming a central plot and populating it with objects and people from the surroundings, imparting it a certain realism—mostly pertaining to fiction. There's also the way of lyrical writing, substituting words and phrases in rhythm, bordering on poetry.

A bold, stripped down way would be to write what comes to the mind, concisely as possible yet allowing for mood and expression, not in a stylistic effort, but to reflect an experience of the world. The form of literature introduced earlier, called the Zuihitsu, is much like that. It is reminiscent of a strikingly elegant journal or weblog. But one cannot just write a Zuihitsu. There are very few works officially recognised thus.³² It comes from a lifetime of observation, from acute perceptivity towards the shifting textures of the world, and all very emotionally.

When work on this project commenced, one of the primary concerns was how to write the literary part. As expressed earlier, it is only partly in the interest of this book to be a master's thesis. That is where it all started, still remains the most urgent concern, but theses tends to be academic, and interest few people outside university. This project always wanted to reach out to the people concerned with books—industry and bibliophiles

alike. A thought occurred if it could somehow be made more relatable in writing. And how does something that deals in books become *interesting* to readers?

Perhaps with an emotional narrative? The archetypal book or memorable article has one. It's not about what it is, but how it is about that—as many speak of works of art and the cinema.³³ But an emotional narrative is a risky endeavour in the context of academic literature. Is it achieved without loss of credibility? Certainly it could not be that reason is substituted with feeling. But what if it is written in the manner of feeling, or reasoning expressed as it actually occurs in the mind, without imposing structure—something of a stream-of-consciousness narrative? The Zuihitsu is an interesting premise as it is almost exclusively concerned with *process*. There is nothing overtly emotional about a work like Sei Shonagon's *The Pillow Book*³⁴. *Emotion* is merely in the manner the world is perceived, how the banal occurrence of leaves falling from a tree become wondrous to behold when invested with recognition of its place in nature's grand scheme, its process of becoming something else. It is about recording impressions and thoughts without affecting their flow—that might be applied here.

Writing in *flow* could also solve another problem. After the physical frame had been devised and it was understood that the form and length of the text would be guided by some manner of page arrangement, it became a challenge—how? To follow structures rigidly would result in an artificially conceived, segmented narrative. Ultimately, the literature should be

integrated with the physical; if that is not achieved, this project has failed. The ideal outcome is a seamless physical entity without modal boundaries. The frame should act as a formative force, the body to which the text belongs; and the text, the definition to the body. In its physical formation of square and line, the *body* is geometric and angular; perhaps the text could ebb and flow to complement. Beyond that formal notion of intertwined opposites, it could also bring a lightening of sorts to a complicated process with much conceptualising. As discussed before, it could make it more relatable. With a de-structured and intuitive approach to writing, the text would be freed to complete the length of the frame without ever having been forced to. The challenge would be to ensure that it does not overflow or fall short. For that, the frame could be expanded to a fully-realised system for writing. It could start with the 144 pages, 144 surfaces for type-setting. Do all 144 need be filled with type; does it really start with the type or with text? With type. That is what becomes physically part of the whole. Each page, 7" × 7", filled with type and image. It is better to define in terms of point-sizes of type as it is up to the literature to call upon images as the writing progresses. But it is up to the page to decide what sizes these images should be. A 7" × 7" page in print, with some margin, could contain approximately 30–35 lines of 8–11 pt type. Each pt is $\frac{1}{72}$ of an inch. A $5\frac{1}{4}$ – $5\frac{3}{4}$ " high column of type with 12–16 pt leading. Images could fill whole pages, spreads or any portion of each page. Headings, captions and special sections could span lines as necessary. But why should the type be restricted to body sizes? Can the type not be larger, to be bolder and more physical? They could well be, but for the text to be comfortably read

across a minimum of 100 pages—accounting for the 60 percent—it is best set to that range. Larger point sizes could be deployed occasionally for impact—or other design reasons—but with overuse, their effect would be numbing and overall unpleasant to read. Also, what is more solid in effect—a tightly wound column of text or a few lines of display type with swathes of white-space in between? It is best to use body-sized type in single columns. What typeface? It's perhaps less meaningful to make that decision at the outset, before starting to write. There are any number of type families available in any classification; it is difficult to argue how one would be the absolute best. The choice is made as a balance between aesthetic and functional concerns. Legibility and emotion for instance. How does the usage of a certain typeface impact the literary meaning of a group of characters? Does it reinforce, or cause tension due to dissonance? If the point size has been instated—readability assured in effect—a larger, even disproportionate concern, falls on aesthetics, and without the literature in place, it is impossible to arrive at a decision. The same would be for colour. They could transform in appearance from page to page as the text develops. By default it might be a serif set in black or dark grey. And the page itself—that could be left exposed. How about chapters and page numbers?

Chapters, sections and episodes are semantic divisions applied to what would otherwise be a continuous, impenetrable narrative without pauses or break. Their presence, as with paragraphs', ensure that even a large body of text is navigated with ease. Readers can choose to read a few chapters,

or skip to some part that they are interested in, as directed by the table of contents. But a lack of logical organisation does not necessarily imply that the narrative should flow incessantly. There could still be a high level arrangement based on intuition or emulation of some factor. It could also be symbolic, representing stages of the thesis in abstract form. Before that—how about paragraphs? For a text in the style of Zuihitsu, would it be incongruent to introduce breaks in narrative? But free-flowing does not quite suggest a narrative without breaks. Thoughts are more fragmented and abrupt than continuous and smooth. If the narrative is to follow that process, it could employ paragraph and line breaks to emulate the same. They are not then distinct portions but fragmented parts. *Fragmentation* could also be a device for the non-logical division of text.

A free-flowing narrative across 144 pages, formed in parts. Does it suggest that the unity of the text, and the narrative, is somehow broken? Here is a problem: if the narrative is to be coded in literary text that would blend with a physical body to create the book, how could it exist in parts, unless the body itself exists in parts? Is it not so that objects are perceived in continuum, not biologically—that would be the R.E.M stage—but in the mind? One does not perceive such *parts* and combine them to form a *thing*. The tendency of the mind is to seek correlation and simplify complexity. What could justify the breaking up of text? Or is it a flawed thought? Arranging the text in parts—is it equated with the breaking of narrative? Then are paragraphs not breaking the narrative? It can only be that logically dividing the text breaks the narrative. A free-flowing narrative arranged in parts need not

be *broken*. To reflect the process, it could be in linear time. A free-flowing narrative progressing in continuum, arranged for accessibility—and to symbolic representation—in parts, but essentially continuous and unbroken. How could this multi-partite formation be introduced to reflect the process? The first stage of the process was Research. Forming a perspective on the nature of development of books, design, art and history in general. The events and consequences that led to the current situation. Learning from the past. Looking for patterns. Before books there was architecture and art. Starting with that, in linear time, the development of culture at large. The research started with pre-historical art and continued till the modern age. Three different strands on art, design and books. Then onto present day.

The second stage was Context. Delving deeper into the nature of books—wherein lies the conflict?—setting the premise to be explored, and attempting to define it to the best of knowledge. This is where the project took form. It was understood at this stage what it would require to pursue this subject. But it still lacked cohesion.

The third stage was Synthesis. Acquiring knowledge on the topics concerned with the project. Reading texts on anthropology, sociology and aesthetics. Concerning semiotics and semiology. Modernity and aesthetics. Biographies on Issey Miyake, Naoto Fukasawa and Shiro Kuramata; Donald Richie's *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics*; Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows*; Sei Shonagon; Basho, Issa and Buson; Kenya Hara's *Designing Design*. A few

others too, regarding the notion of beauty, and aesthetics in the context of sustainability, like Lance Hosey's *The Shape of Green*. Another few books on colour and typography. But the synthesis largely focused on the project's context in the modern age and its aesthetic influences.

The fourth stage is Creation. The writing of the literary work and the book's making. Starting with a deconstruction of the book. Its cultural boundaries have been verified in the previous stage, now is the occasion to perform its unmaking. Observance of its structures collapsing until it dissolves into non-existence. An unexpected turn at this point when the *reality* of things was brought into question. Is an object real? The process was stalled and research re-initiated to understand the philosophy of *materiality* and *being*. Then again towards the book and the book. Gradually, its writing. Then whatever end the process may lead to.

A fifth stage would be Epilogue. To these, an Introduction and Abstract could be added—additional narrative elements taking place outside the process and hence, positioned at the beginning and the end. They could jointly form a second, logical narrative which describes the project in a detached, but self-conscious mode. The positioning also reflects their incidence in the project's timeframe. The Introduction is a statement of intent which occurs before the actual process has begun—the writing and creditable research—and the Abstract can only be written after. Even now, with the project's end yet to be achieved, it remains a possible description of an unknown. A conflict? The project is completed only once the book

has been made, and the BOOK cannot be made before the writing itself is complete, so how is the Abstract included in the BOOK? Maybe it should exist separate, included in the submission as a leaflet or a single sheet of paper. That could solve the issue, or perhaps by writing it onto the BOOK after it has been produced. Like a writing on the wall. But will that again result in a conflict as the BOOK is devised to reflect the process of its creation—an artefact sculpted in time? The linearity of its progression—the narrative's—attempts to make the depiction complete, that the BOOK exists as a physical object as real and contiguously experienced as a room or a pencil. If this linear progression in time is broken by the introduction of an external narrative that took place after its making, does it not cause the BOOK to collapse upon itself? As if a future effect is transposed to the past. Or worse—does it become an entirely different artefact? If something related or unrelated is added to the BOOK, does it change in essence? Depends on the *something*, but it would no longer be the pure *BOOK* that is the subject of this project.

What if this addition was expected and accounted for—if this BOOK is completed not in production but after it has been provided with an abstract? That would be fundamentally different from producing the BOOK with the Abstract as the Abstract is made of the BOOK, not the literary work. In actual terms, it is about the project, but as the project is embodied by the BOOK and narrated through it, the BOOK could be taken to represent it. What is better—to add the Abstract to the submission separately or include it within the BOOK? Perhaps to add separately as the

Abstract is ultimately more concerned with the project itself. Is the same applicable to the Introduction? But there is no temporal conflict—it exists within the timeframe, before the book is made. In reappraisal, it is also an essentiality for the book to conform to the outlines of a master's thesis. There could be an equal concern of integrity, if necessary elements are to be stripped apart into separate entities. The best approach might be to include both within its physical extent. So, the Introduction can be written in the beginning, as a second narrative, and the Abstract added onto a pre-allocated space at the end, as a third narrative. Both logically conceived and distinct in their style. The Introduction could maintain some fluidity of description while the Abstract is conceived to pre-established standards. The major narrative could still exist in five parts, chronologically ordered and written in sequence to represent the stages of the process. But is it truly linear?

The first—Research. When the process begins. How is it written linearly? Can it be narrated along as the process progresses or is it narrated afterwards? In both cases, is it possible to narrate it in a linear strand? *Research* as such does not have a determinate beginning or an end, here it can be arbitrarily established to start after the thesis proposal. What had been studied so far would be previously acquired knowledge that has contributed to research, and the process directly, but not recognised as part of Research. Where can it be assumed to end? Perhaps only before the Epilogue. Should it then progress as another strand that runs parallel to other stages until it ceases to be of relevance? But following the distinction made between the

stage Research and research as an act, it could also conclude after some specifics have been fulfilled. The purpose, as discussed earlier, is largely to establish perspective. It could then be renamed to Perspective and end with the narration of historical context, the development of culture at large. But is it still narrated linearly, following book to book, addressing information and forming a coherent body of thought in the process? Is that possible and does it help accessibility at all? And the most critical issue—how is it possible to construct the narrative along the before its criteria was established in a subsequent phase?

To most accurately reflect the process, the writing should perhaps be done in conjunction with it, accumulating thoughts, material and tracing the process' many diversions. That could be considered *real-time* as it occupies the same temporal span. The result would however be more than a year's worth of recordings, subsequently requiring editing to be condensed into a manageable size, and made—if somewhat—coherent. Without it, the text would perhaps be more representative and authentic. With it, there would be a narrative. In the act, real-time, linear recording would be transformed into post-occurrence, non-linear, re-telling. It is arguably inferior to a linear re-telling written in a stretch and not edited. Could that be attempted?

If the writing is linear and performed after the process, it would demand a thorough knowledge of all that has occurred, without having to refer to external documents for the significant details. If this linearity is itself expressed through free-form exploration, it would, in effect, have to be

recounted from memory. It is only in the mind that previous and current experience is mingled with circumstantial elements to spawn a truly natural flow of thought that can be transcribed by the hand in writing. It is not much of consequence whether it is handwritten or typed as both can allow for uninterrupted coordination with the mind. Here it is more convenient to use writing, to avoid a further procedure of digitising before final typesetting. But what does this entail? Is it reasonable to attempt to digest all the information acquired in the Perspective phase, without material recordings at hand, and then expect it all to distill down to a clear strand recalled by memory? It could be attempted, by a rigorous approach to research which prioritises thoroughness over speed and expanse. Yet the process might proceed extremely slow as factual errors and the occasional muddle are unavoidable. How are they tackled?

With the usual possibility of editing ruled out, the text would likely have to be re-written on discovery of an error, or if the process veers off to dead-ends. But from which point onwards? Would true linear progression demand that everything be rewritten from the beginning, or could the narration be resumed from the point of incidence? An absolute, ceaseless continuity is indeed the ideal, but perhaps it is entirely too unfeasible. Maintaining continuity in instances could be adequate. The process could mandate that any occurrence of error, or unwanted diversion, be traced back to its earliest occurrence and the narration resumed from there. The point could be the exact sentence with the idea of the *error*, or suggestion of the *diversion*. The Perspective could then be narrated afterwards, linearly,

in a strand. Is the single strand really the best to contain and represent all historic developments? The primary channels of this cultural discourse are Art, Architecture, Design and Books. Art and Architecture could perhaps be considered one, with an industrial distinction made of Design. Books, being the central concern, merit a separate strand. It would be fascinating to trace and compare its development as a technology to the development of Art and Design. And the development of Art and Design themselves. Linearity here could also follow in that it begins at the dawn of History and continues to the modern age. But then, considering the subsequent stage of *Context*, how are they linked? Should the retelling follow the manner in which *perspective* was formed, or should it be in the way it unfolds? Vaguely speaking, both progress along the same timeline, and *lead* to the present context. The mind organises information based on correlation, though events may also be deliberately memorised in sequence. There is a stylistic potential unique to re-telling developments historically. The linear juxtaposition of the three strands create a visual timeline, its impact more severe than pure literary evocation. But considering that it is more vital to be representative of the process, is it possible to narrate the subsequent stages as they were formed? The Context and Synthesis are complex and intricate. It would be debilitating to write them continuously, from memory and with no tolerance for error. It's perhaps not possible at all. Also, would that not be conflicting, to force an order upon the retelling, if the narrative is to be fluid, and shifting to evolving loci, like a Zuihitsu? The writing should ostensibly progress in its own way. If all concerned issues are not covered in continuous instances, it has to be re-attempted from

where the stage begins. In the case of Perspective, as it needs a definite point of beginning, it seems more fruitful to start with grand history.

The Context could essentially continue from that, chronologically, or however the narrative progresses. The timeline is more fragmented, likely so, yet it can overall be considered linear in that it retells the stage of the process, as it is remembered, with fidelity. No inconsistencies so far.

The Synthesis is yet more fragmented, and flits between multiple plot-points in a warped temporal space. It is difficult to follow any chronological line as multiple issues from the past and present collide with each other to spark off new directions and pronouncements. But it should manage to establish the different forces acting on the project. Still, fundamentally an act of recounting decisions.

The Creation is what is occurring at the instant. It began with a retelling—a prologue of sorts—followed by a sample of narrational style and plunged deep into ontology. It was expected to continue with exploring the natures of book and BOOK, and ultimately produce some description of a process, gradually woven as the writing spurs along. In multiple ways it came to be different from the three previous stages. Unlike them, it approaches real-time existence. These words that are read are not the retelling of previous occurrence. The concerns narrated here are very immediate. A few pages back, it appeared first with the statement: "In a *true* sense, it is unknown." This was a previously un-encountered thought. It obstructed

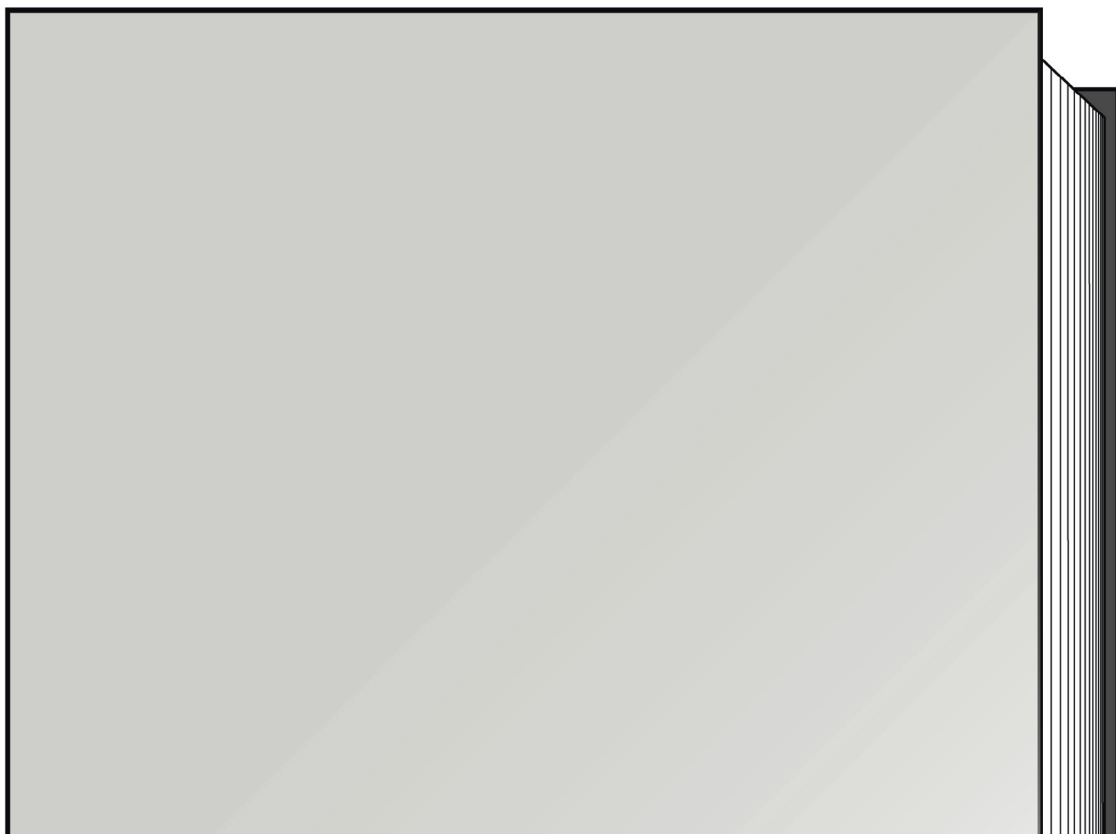
the writing, threatened the completion of this project and forced a new—and equally exhausting—process of research when it was assumed that nothing was left unexplored. As it occurred within this stage and remains restricted to it, no explicit mention was made, but in the process perhaps completely changed the outcome and previous attitudes toward the book, its materiality in particular, and this book that is being read. After it was finally navigated, the process got back to narrating past decisions, but the outlook had changed. Can it be considered linear, when it so abruptly switches back and forth between past decisions and present concerns?

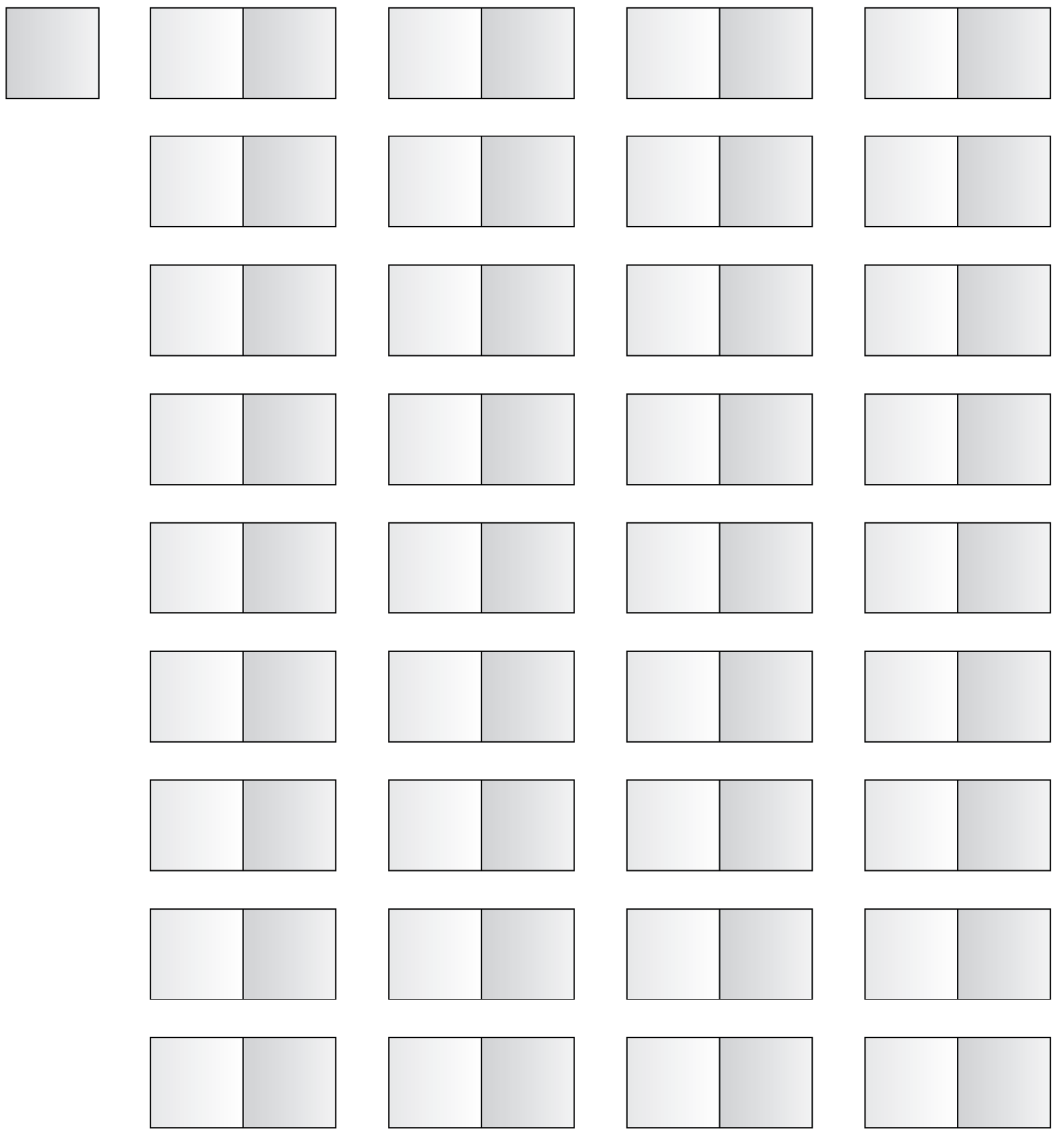
Looking at it from the present, the proceedings in whole seem linear, turning in and about, drawing on past and long-past information to coalesce into a unified body of thought. But viewed from instances, it seems disjointed and overlapping. Perhaps it is only linear in that it was written linearly, and thoughts flowing in time can only have a singular past. In representing the process, it changes modes between real-time concerns and linear retelling. It could be after all that it is not linear in the sense that was intended. The narration has failed to depict the process as it happened, with the cause-and-effect chain broken and presented non-linearly. It is also difficult to imagine how it could have been possible. If the process is *recounted* according to a frame established in a succeeding stage, how could it be *linear* and *progressive*? Even experiencing the book—is it possible to cultivate in physical aspects, this process of transformation and development, as the narrative progresses? It was a logical fallacy that it was assumed possible. The book is not an artefact sculpted in time.

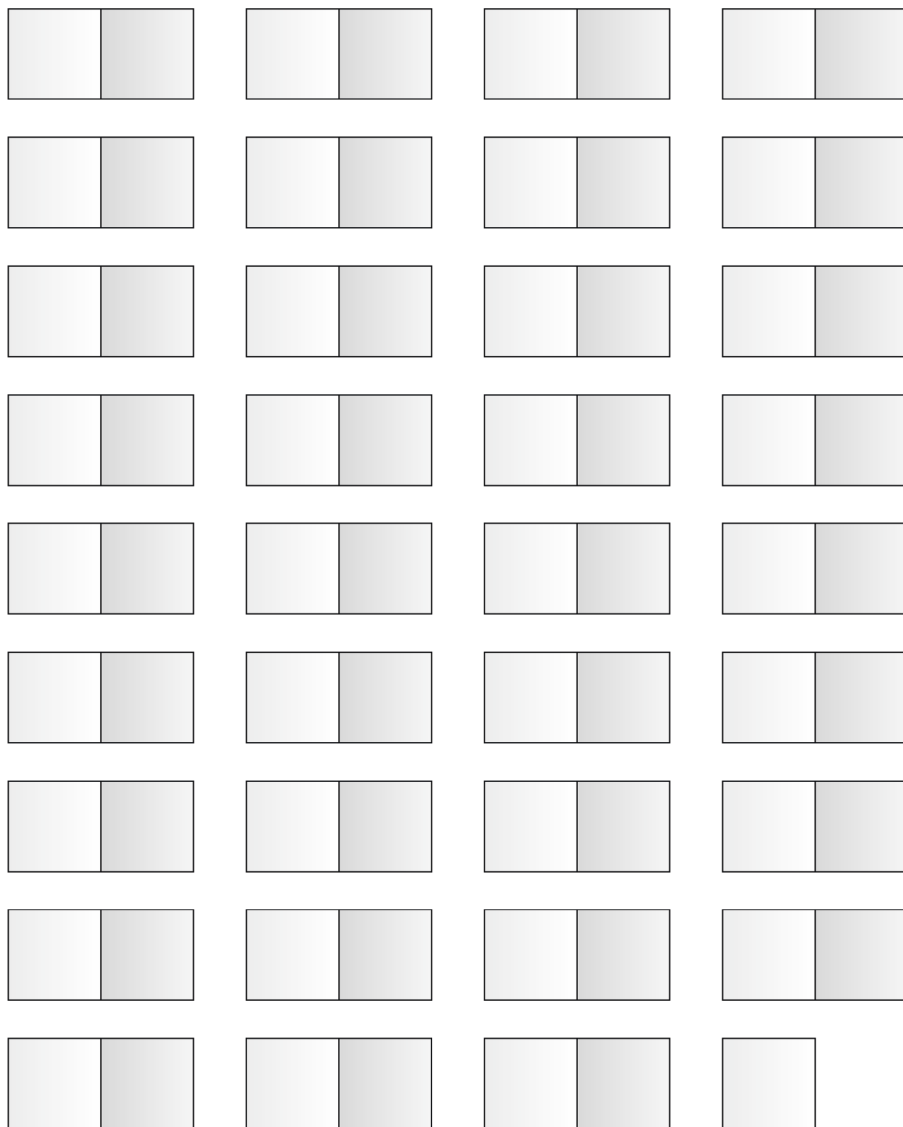
Nevertheless, this method of narrative is arguably the most veracious in representing the actual process of the project—in embodying it. While it has failed in accurate temporal simulation, it has achieved in relaying the mind of the researcher and the experience of research—with all its uncertainties and obsessions—in an emotionally resonant form. There is also an aspect of time left in that, even in broken fragments, an interlocutor is able to share *real-time* moments with the ongoing process. It is a contendable success in emulating the act of the artist-researcher at work.

Still, recalling previous intentions, if the five stages of the process are to be transformed into five parts of the major narrative, how are the pages divided between them? Should they be allocated in consideration of length or perceived significance or is it entirely up to the narrative to fill the pages? But the Introduction and Abstract—they are separate narratives—how are pages divided between them and the major narrative? The logical solution would be to establish limits as part of the frame, which could prevent the writing from wandering too far off-kilter. That would also be in recognition of the BOOK's physicality. How could the division be made? In terms of significance, all parts of the major narrative stand equal, even the Introduction and Abstract—being necessary prerequisites—cannot be regarded any less. But before the page division of narratives, how are the cover pages, reference-lists, end-sheets and titles organised? Do they need to be numbered at all in an anti-logical arrangement?

THE FRAME







To resemble a standard book, there could be a title page; it is also needed to include some identifiers on the thesis. Typically there is first a title *teaser* and then a spread with the title repeated again, and provided with additional information about the publisher, year, taglines and often the left hand side having some details on the printer. In an elaborate arrange this could extend to 5, but here 3 cover pages would be sufficient.

Then there are Teasers for each section, usually full-bleed colour spreads for art and design books, and just a caption or section-title for novels and texts. $2 \text{ pages} \times 5 \text{ sections} = 10 \text{ teasers}$. Between these and the content pages, there is usually a blank *verso*—page on the left hand side—in case of languages read from left to right, which start on the right. Considering 5 parts of the major narrative, and 1 part each for the Introduction and Abstract—7 blank versos in all. For the content pages themselves, the Abstract is usually required a single page. The Introduction could be 3–5 pages long. To include a reference list, it could be 5.

The remaining 117 pages spread across five parts, and an additional blank page next to the back cover. The Epilogue is likely the easiest to allocate as it should not extend beyond 5–7 pages. Odd numbers are required to match the teaser spreads and blank versos. If the Epilogue is taken to be 5, the other four parts, in proportionate length could be:

Perspective, 6–7 times; Context, $1\frac{1}{2}$ –2 times; Synthesis, 4– $4\frac{1}{2}$ times; and Creation, roughly 10 times.

In exact number of pages, it could be—

Introduction: 5 pages

Perspective: 33 pages

Context: 7 pages

Synthesis: 21 pages

Creation: 51 pages

Epilogue: 5 pages

Abstract: 1 page

Page numbers are obsolete without organisation so the book could do without them. Their absence would also signify that it is meant to be read from beginning to end—even forcing that behaviour to an extent. The idea of a physical object to be held in continuum is still eternally valid. The matter of reference lists are somewhat more delicate as it is hard to determine the exact number of pages required by the time the writing is complete. It could be done so that the number of pages allocated to each section could be organically distributed between narration and references. Also endnotes. To follow an academic referencing style, Oxford or Documentary-note would be preferable to the APA style due to its non-interference in the flow of text. The frequent usage of parentheses-enclosed author references come upon as a rather unwieldy method too, considering how additional footnotes might be required, and as this text, in the respect of an academic work, not all too concerned with existing literature. The inability to instantly identify referenced works would not come upon as

an impediment for its appraisal. To distinguish footnotes from references, colour coding might be employed on the citational superscript-characters.

How is this precise frame—7 parts of 144 pages, typeset in 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ –5 $\frac{3}{4}$ " high block of type with 12–16pt leading—maintained in writing? Could a wireframe be employed, and how exact it should be then, if the text is allowed to affect the frame reciprocally? To avoid indulging in editorial design, it would be ideal to use a plain text editor that provides some opportunity for manipulating the typing area and character-faces. As the typeface hasn't been decided, a monospace could serve as stand-in. There's a bit of a challenge approximating print-sizes to digital, so a visual comparison as opposed to a metric one might prove more beneficial to simulating the reading experience; there is no need for accurate matching. Text composed in this frame could in turn be typeset to an actual page layout, some reverse adjustments to follow. Once every page is written, a minor proof-reading activity could be pursued to weed out any misplaced words or spellings. Could the layout reflect the frame? Issuing outlines on every page might affect reading contrarily, it could perhaps have baselines to reveal the typographic grid to which the type is set. Like scaffolding or revealing an invisible, underlying structure. The colour could be blue as in graphic tradition or a fiery red, if used in most gentle stroke-widths.

Endnotes:

1. Martin Heidegger's project of deconstructing ontological concepts and social meanings using philosophy
3. Denoting a transition from abstract ideation in the mind to concrete formation
4. Something that is perceived
5. An idea or mental image that corresponds to the essential features of a class of objects
6. Referring to Empiricist and Phenomenalist schools of thought
7. Understanding physical events within the framework laid out by Quantum Mechanics; specifically the Copenhagen Interpretations and its future developments
8. Transcendental idealist
15. From Kant's 'The Critique of Pure Reason', and central to transcendental idealism
30. Term that has been used as a close approximation for *that which refers to its own class, category or kind*

31. Aesthetic associated with rusticity and simple living
34. One of the most important works of Japanese literature and the first Zuihitsu

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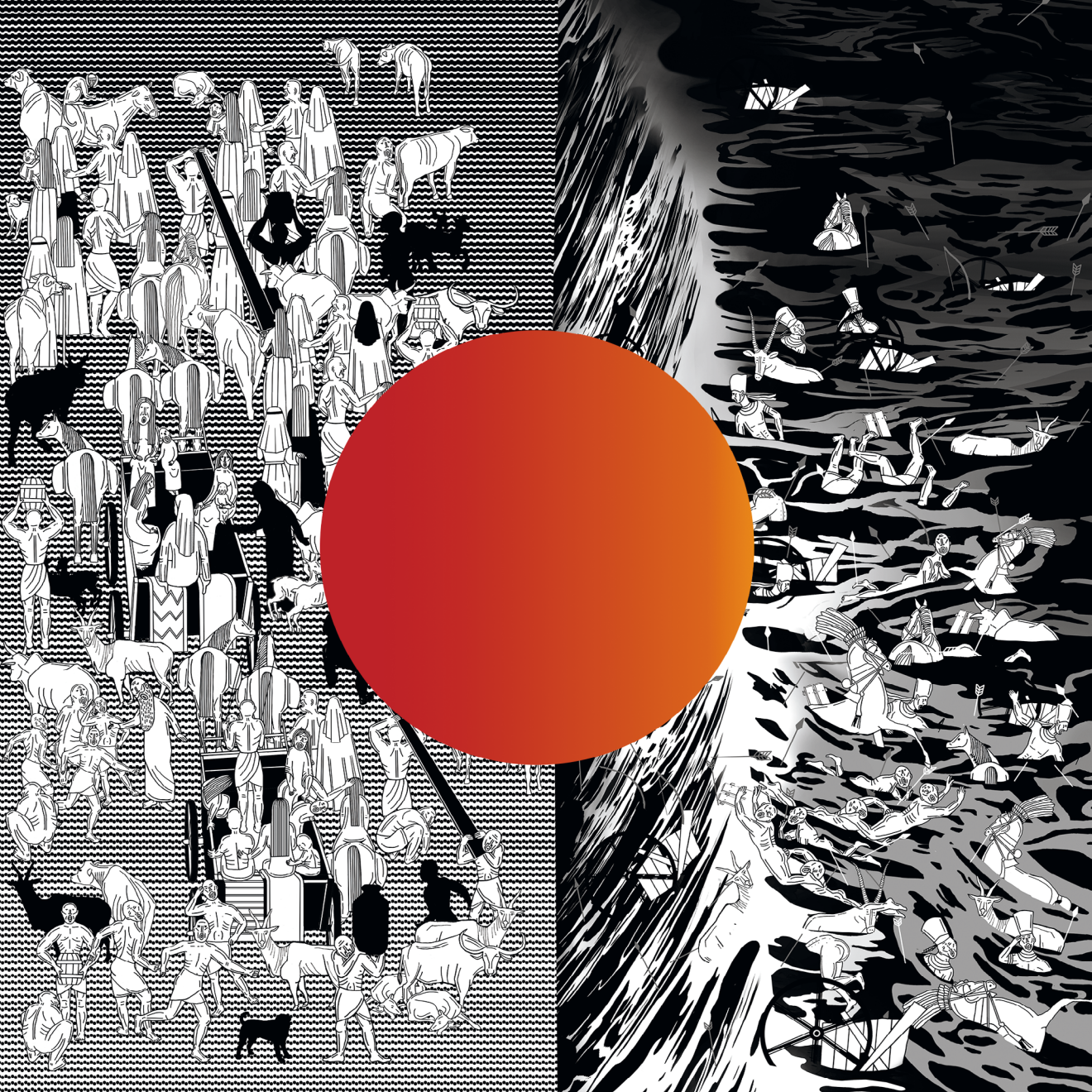
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The book is almost made. Only a few pages remain to be written and most of editorial design too have been pondered in some capacity in the mind. Some pictures have already been selected for the spreads. The colour scheme now favoured is a mixture of noir and red, and that blue for the baseline grid. The fonts will eventually be chosen and typeset to the 12–16 pt leading. What will happen to the books after they have been produced?

They are not really made for the libraries. Perhaps this book has to be placed somewhere like that, likely at the ARALIS library close by. But other books made by other designers, where could they be sold or leased or rented or performed or entertained for the guests?

They could be sold at design stores. They could also be produced on-demand. Someone could order a book in a bed's mould for their little boy. Someone could even make a virtual reality book if the technology shall progress so far as to make it indistinct from physically real.

I had mentioned at the outset that this book will feature a meta-narrative. This was an intention. When I had tried writing some pages in practice for the book—in an emulation of Zuihitsu—it seemed that inspiration from strange corners seep into the narrative. I wondered:

‘Why not reveal it, the connections that seem obvious?’

There could also be a system of shared ownership, a cross between a library and a museum that houses and lends these artefacts for cultural dissemination of ideas. But that cannot conveniently sidestep free-market economics.

For mass adoption, a process for efficient production and marketing needs to be in place. The publisher is the key stakeholder, who facilitates the interaction between the designer, writer and the factory-lines. There is no particular method. Viewed as a design-driven process, it could start with ideation, mood-boards and isometric diagrams. The collaboration between the writer and the designer becomes crucial. A new kind of artist-designer-writer could also attempt all this alone in a self-published initiative.

If the major narrative was the consciousness of the BOOK, this was its sub-consciousness. A fragmented strand following along the sidelines, it ranged between everything from ruminations on the nature of art to a quote from Moby Dick. First it seemed natural, adding to the energy of the work, instilling in it a certain liveliness of character, the self-conflicts of the mind and context to the writing. But to fit to the physical object, it too had to follow the frame. That was not feasible. The uncontrolled rhythms of the meta-text's appearance threatened to break the autonomy of the page; in some instances it flowed through, while others were left with strange vacant spaces. The silence wrought by it seemed to suggest something. Emptiness became too self-conscious.

How will the BOOK affect books?

No doubt that e-books shall continue to disperse. They will perhaps replace paperbacks, like CDs and other physical media are replaced by content streaming services. A truly sensual reading experience will still be missed. Writers could take cue and bring stories back to the days of gathering before fire and listening to the story-teller. Designers could take note and start building contemporarily meaningful artefacts at the intersection of technology, physicality and narration.

The worst effect was still that it all seemed too affected. The initial authenticity of associations—faint memories and recollections on the source material of thoughts—ebbed out and became infested with anecdotal evidence. It appeared to me that the mind had begun adjusting to the process.

Something similar had happened with the wrapping of text, or how the narrative mysteriously attained a new plasticity that conformed seamlessly to the page, steadily avoiding paragraph breaks at the end.

It was a loss to discontinue all those allusions to Cinema, the parallel thread on quantum mechanical views, why parentheses and brackets were never used, and how this project holds ground as an instance of practice-led research. But possibly all that is better left in innuendos and takes which never materialise, dissolving into a less than reliable ‘subtext’.

*One last thing that could be
mentioned is the literary work
that inspired this project—
'The New Life', by Orhan
Pamuk.*

*‘So it was that
as I read my
point of view
was transformed
by the book, and
the book was
transformed by
my point
of view.’*

ABSTRACT

keywords:

books, self-reflexivity,

physicality, process

There is some mixture of material and immaterial artefacts that the term *book* references. Key among them would be the idea of a literary work contained in a physical object and a physical object that has a literary work contained in it. In this thesis, I explored the implications of these complementary notions, how they developed and where they stand in contemporary society. From there, I embarked on an artistic/practice-led research project of envisioning an alternate state of book—which I called BOOK to avoid confusion—and saw what possibilities of expression that could yield. The mission was to create a physical object that includes a work of literature as an integral part and make that the thesis submission, narrating its own process of making. I assumed that it would prove a fascinating artefact for storytelling in an age where the most intimate products are frigid receptacles for digital content. There is no strict conclusion to be made, but the project ends with a hopeful note on how publishers and writers could adopt this experimental method for producing new kinds of books relevant to modern times, and a note towards a more emotional approach to academic writing.

No post-its were harmed during the design process.

